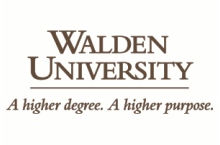

2021

Volunteer Motivation of Individuals in Rural Pacific Northwest

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Volunteer Motivation of Individuals in Rural Pacific Northwest

by

Lenea Pierzchanowski

MA, University of Oklahoma, 1998

BS, University of Idaho, 1993

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

May 2021

Abstract

Volunteering is a selfless social action in which an individual chooses to participate through personal motivations. These actions of public service are a combination of need-based vacancies within organizations and unpaid compensation for filling those needs. The purpose of this research was to identify motivational attributes of individuals who volunteer in the identified rural area using one-on-one semi-structured interviews through the lens of the volunteer process model, in addition to the social identity, ecological, and social capital theories. The 15 participants for this study were over the age of 18, fluently spoke and read English, and had been a volunteer in the rural area for over one year prior to being interviewed. Most participants were white women who were retired, and aged 60 and above. This project addressed the quandary of what motivated individuals in a rural area of the Pacific Northwest to volunteer as well as insights into the experiences they had as volunteers in their local communities. The qualitative design was applied to this research wherein transcribed interviews were coded for attribute themes and values to explore the phenomenon of rural volunteering. It was apparent that the participants shared common denominators of wanting to help others in their community, ideals of altruistic compassion, and the view that volunteering in a rural community is more intimate than urban volunteering and easier to see needs and subsequently results, as well as being based on trust between parties. Growing volunteer workforces within rural areas can create positive social change by meeting the needs of a community and building trusting partnerships and pride within that community.

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Dedication

This is dedicated to the little girl in Idaho who has wanted this for a very long time.

There were so many obstacles and life trials, but we persevered and here we are!

“I am and always will be the optimist.

The hoper of far-flung hopes.

The dreamer of improbable dreams.”

Doctor Who

Acknowledgments

Anne Frank wrote, “How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

“We’ve got work to do.” Carry on… ever forward.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Volunteers are recruited by organizations that hope to match knowledge, skills, and abilities to compliment needed social services. Community needs differ and volunteer goodwill motives such as companionship to the lonely, tutoring to the illiterate, counseling to the troubled, kindness to the sick, fostering animals, and support to those in other various areas of need (Butt et al., 2017; Keltner, 2017; Phillips & Phillips, 2010). Volunteerism is a selfless social action which encourages change and engagement at civic levels in local communities, nationally, and internationally (Bronstein & Mason, 2013; Vecina et al., 2013; Wilson, 2000). These civic levels hold a structure base that allow for a positive and supported reciprocal role between volunteer and organization. This reciprocity incorporates five social capital benchmarks; social trust, membership/group participation, altruism, informal interactions, and shared norms (Engbers et al., 2017).

Researchers (Dass-Brailsford et al., 2011; Neal & Christens, 2014; Randle et al., 2014; Selenko et al., 2020) agree that connectedness is one reason that individuals choose to volunteer. In rural areas, it can be assumed that the idea of social connectedness is a key aspect for those who come together altruistically to provide service to their community, and their motivations for doing so are personal and come with varying degrees of commitment (Barati et al., 2013; Ferrari et al., 2014; Kelly, 2013; Kulik, 2006; Selenko et al., 2020). When organizations can attract, motivate, and retain volunteers, the relationship is one of dual commitment (Cady et al., 2018; Kroll, 2011; Omoto et al., 2010) and social needs can be met.

Farmer and Fedor (2001) reported that in the late 1990s, an estimated half of the adult population of the United States committed to volunteering an average of 3.5 hours per week, and $120 billion was donated to various non-profit organizations in 1995 alone. The U.S. Department of Labor (2016) reported that 62.6 million people volunteered between 2014 and 2015, and the results of their survey showed that 24.9% of the population reported participating in some type of volunteer work, an almost 50% decrease in volunteerism. Two years later, the Corporation for National and Community Service reported that in 2018, there were 77.4 million people that volunteered a total of 6.9 billion hours to their local and national communities, and which can be approximated at 167 billion dollars in economic value (Hyde et al., 2018). Due to decreased federal and state governmental budgeting, and increases in terms of needs of services, non-profit strategies to assemble and support a voluntary workforce is in high demand (Lorente-Ayala et al., 2020; Nesbit et al., 2017).

During the literature search, further defined in Chapter 2, there was a lack of research available for volunteering in rural areas, therefore, a google search of the geographic area of interest was conducted to discover what opportunities there might be for an individual seeking potential volunteer positions and in total, 64 organizations with 16 opportunities appeared. The organizations were reaching out to all neighboring areas within this rural region of the Pacific Northwest with these volunteer opportunities.

The purpose of the present study was to explore the motivational attributes of rural volunteers located in the rural Pacific Northwest. The approach to this investigation was qualitative and involved coding and bracketing (Meyrick, 2006), it is a descriptive

qualitative study of volunteering in the rural Pacific Northwest. The data was extracted from transcripts of personal one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. To assure a process of setting aside personal experience, bias, and preconceptions, I kept a research journal, which was then bracketed and used for intensifying the descriptive nature of the study (Spirko, 2019), as well as using reflexivity to continually evaluate and reflect on my own bias and preconceptions on this subject (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Jupp, 2006). These processes are further detailed in Chapter 3, Methodology.

This chapter includes a summary of the research project as well as the problem statement, purpose of the study, the problem, and research questions. An examination of the theoretical framework, nature of the study and definitions, as well as assumptions, research scope, and delimitations is also provided. In addition, limitations are indicated and discussed, as is the significance of the study, future research recommendations, and implications for social change. Finally, a summary of the chapter is provided with a preview of Chapter 2.

The rise in social needs and the decline of funding for services provides an opportunity for volunteers to build a workforce of mutual benefit. This research data can be utilized to build recruitment and retention of volunteers, and residents of this rural community in the Pacific Northwest, as well as similar communities, will become motivated to volunteer and therefore committing to their communities through the work and the relationships that evolve from the work. Social change occurs when these mutually beneficial relationships build due to the strength, they create between members of communities.

Background

The lack of research on rural volunteers, which is further examined in reviewing the literature in Chapter 2, provides a foundation for the current project which focuses on the rural Pacific Northwest. Very little literature has been published on the rural volunteer (Svendsen et al., 2016), especially in the United States. In addition, measures of motivation behind volunteering are not clearly denoted in the literature (Butt et al., 2017). The closest study to the present one that I will be conducting was that of Deen and Shelton (2012) who conducted a study which included 15 interviews with 15 volunteers who were demographically similar and were volunteering for a Parent/Teacher Association in a mid-sized south-west city in the United States which at that time (2008) the population was 365,000. Their study examined the demographics of the volunteers and the similarities as to why the individuals volunteered. To recruit their volunteers, they used a word-of-mouth snowball strategy. Additionally, my literature search revealed that the research is lacking for rural America unless the research is specifically poverty-based.

Rural areas, such as the one reflected in this study, have significant social service needs involving food, shelter, healthcare, protection, and emergency services. In addition, childcare, environmental living conditions, education, transportation, and job-training are further life-enhancing needs that are difficult to meet in rural areas (Meade, 2014; Moore et al., 2016; Svendsen & Svendsen, 2016). These social service needs are crucial to the wellbeing of those who live in rural communities and are lacking and not accessible, and this leads to gaps that volunteers can fill (Mussumeci et al., 2016). Local volunteers are

knowledgeable and sympathetic about the needs in their communities and therefore, one would assume, motivated to volunteer (Davies et al., 2018; Meade, 2014).

Problem Statement

There is a continual decline in financial backing in rural areas for organizations that provide social services to community members in need. Parallel to this is the increase in rural poverty, and therefore an increased need for social services. Due to this imbalance between socio-economic groups, there is also a gap for organizations to recruit and retain a volunteer workforce (Ferragina & Arrigoni, 2017; Hyde et al., 2018; Nesbit et al., 2017). The problem is that organizations and communities do not have research outlining what motivates individuals in rural areas to freely give of themselves as volunteers to meet these social needs. My study intended to address that problem by interviewing volunteers and finding commonalities and patterns of motivational factors within the volunteer's personal definitions of volunteer, reflection on rural versus city volunteering, and the attraction volunteers have toward social service actions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to determine what motivates individuals in this rural area of the Pacific Northwest to volunteer. A two-fold qualitative approach involving informal one-on-one semi-structured interviews and journaling was implemented. Active volunteers were the target participants, and attribute and values coding were used to survey the interview transcripts (Miles et al., 2014; Saldana, 2019). The journal was bracketed, with special attention to personal bias and supposition avoidance (Spirko, 2019).

After facilitating a public request for interested participants, I conducted one-on-one interviews with volunteers from this rural community, in the Pacific Northwest, who have volunteered for over one year, are over the age of 18, and are fluent in English. The questions were specific to what motivated them to volunteer, what types of organizations they volunteered or are volunteering for, what volunteering means to them, and what they have gained from their volunteering experiences and how it might differ from volunteering in a larger populated area.

Research Questions

RQ1: What motivates individuals in the rural Pacific Northwest to volunteer?

RQ2: How do rural volunteers describe their experience as a volunteer?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study relied on integrating four concepts: the volunteer process model, social identity theory, ecological theory, and social capital theory. The phenomenon of volunteerism or giving freely of one's time, skills, and knowledge and there is not a required motion nor consequence for whether one volunteers nor are there continual required accolades of any sort (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2019; Kulik, 2006; Wilson, 2000; Wilson & Musick, 1999). Theoretical frameworks are extensively defined in Chapter 2: Literature Review, and briefly defined here.

The volunteer process model emphasizes the role of motivation, the diversity of motivation and applies them to the individual who volunteers. The model has three defining stages: antecedent, experience, and consequence. Each is driven by the connections individuals have between themselves, those they volunteer with, and those

that run the organization (Clary & Snyder, 1999; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998; Phillips & Phillips, 2010). The antecedent stage regards the link between the personality of the individual and how it affects their motivation, decision making process, and tendency to choose a path of volunteering as well as which organization they will volunteer for. The experience stage pertains to the actual volunteering process, the volunteer participation process, and the relationships the individual develops within the organization they have chosen to volunteer for. Finally, the consequence stage refers to changes that occur in the attitudes toward the events regarding the volunteer service or the community, the gain or sharing of knowledge by the individual, and the individual's behaviors regarding volunteering in the future (Clary et al., 1998; Greenslade & White, 2005; Houle et al., 2005; Kelly, 2013). Using these stages as a platform for the structure of this research project as well as developing personalized interview questions helped when making connections between the interview responses and the motivational attributes.

The social identity theory involves the relationship between the individual and their relationships and memberships within the human connections throughout their lives. In reference to an individual as a volunteer, the organization would be the group and the individual's social identity and self-concept would draw from the experience; volunteering would provide a belonging, a working for a common goal, and the ability to enhance the community in which they live (Dutt & Grabe, 2014; Lai et al., 2013; Nieves, 2012; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998). The act of volunteering is a social role for an individual to assume and it is public in nature, and therefore these individuals, according to this theory, would have a deeper connection to their community and a sense of social

identity or responsibility and positive and high regard within their higher sense of self within that role (Kelly, 2013; Kroll, 2011; Tajfel, 1982).

Bronfenbrenner (1977) disclosed a nested-systems theory which defined how individuals become connected within their social roles. The ecological theory provides a notion that links the individual's development to multi-levels of personal interactions which gears them toward roles they will assume throughout their lifetime. Individuals that are motivated to volunteer have attributes wherein they have developed a sense of responsibility to their community and a belongingness to the organizations they are volunteering for (Bushway et al., 2011; Vecina et al., 2013; Wilson, 2000; Wilson & Musick, 1999). Linking this theory to the social identity theory regarding belongingness and the motivation to volunteer provided insight into the attributes that guided individuals to volunteer satisfying the research questions.

Volunteerism is considered an altruistic, individual choice (Bushway et al., 2011; Wilson & Musick, 1999). True altruism is defined by Smith (2000) as a tendency which comes from within wherein an individual or a group is focused on service to another, not in the gain to oneself. The Social capital theory puts "gain" regarding volunteering into perspective. Using this theory as a reflection on the individual who develops a change in status, builds relationships, undergoes training, grows their knowledge, skills and abilities as an individual who is gaining (Aharony, 2016; Aziz, 2015).

Implementing these four ideas was desirable for this research due to the similarities in context as well as providing the ability to provide greater insight into the motivational attributes of rural volunteers. The volunteer process model is directly related

to motivation, the social identity theory involves individuality in motivation, the ecological theory involves associating volunteers with communities and organizations, and the social capital theory extends the idea of altruism regarding and specific to volunteering.

Nature of the Study

A basic qualitative research design was used to guide and analyze this research. This design was used to explore participant descriptions, motivations, and perceptions regarding how they decided to volunteer, what they perceived to have gained from volunteering, and overall perceptions of volunteers and rural volunteering. Utilizing a qualitative approach, which will provide a descriptive in-depth picture as to why and how participants came to volunteer in the rural Pacific Northwest personalized the data as well as provided explanations for the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Creswell & Clark, 2017). In addition, the research questions were addressed in a transparent and systematic way, giving a meaningful account of the project from concept to analysis to conclusion (Miles et al., 2014).

Data collection for this research was based on transcripts from semi-structured interviews conducted with current volunteers in the rural Pacific Northwest. Using the volunteer process model enabled provided a functional approach to the role of motivation, the diversity of motivation and how this motivation is reflected on by the individual pre and post volunteering (Cady et al., 2018; Gazley, 2013; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998).The volunteer process model was used as a guide to develop interview questions. Prior to starting the interview process for this project, a piloting of the

questions with three people with volunteer experience, who were familiar to me was done. This pilot ensured that the questions led to results that were pertinent to this project, as well as noted that the timing of one-hour was enough for in-depth answers to the questions and that the questions were relevant, informed, and reliable. I requested that the three pilot participants provide constructive feedback as to the interview and the interview questions to further the effectiveness of the process.

After the pilot, I sent emails to five individuals who I knew volunteered in the rural Pacific Northwest area which is specific to this study. I intended to advertise in local newspapers using bulletin boards and flyers in local shops as well as volunteer recruitment offices; however, the original emails snowballed, and I was able to schedule 15 interviews quickly. In the original emails, I included my contact information, a synopsis of the research project, and the consent form. I explained that interviews would be no longer than one hour and that they would be telephonic, and if they were interested in participating, they were required to send a reply email that read, 'I consent' and in return I scheduled the interviews.

The scheduled interviews took place telephonically instead of in person due to the 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. As I interviewed participants, I wrote abbreviated responses and comments on blank interview worksheets. Within 48 hours, the interviews were fully transcribed. Participants' sampling frame included those that were currently volunteering, had volunteered for a year or more, spoke and read fluent English, and were over 18. Prior to starting each interview, an explanation of the research, procedures for the research, and storing of the results as well as the pre-signed

participant consent form was discussed. Preliminary questions regarding the participant's qualifications were asked and the interview commenced.

Coding a designated label assigned to a piece of data (Elliott, 2018; Saldana, 2019), and analysis of the transcripts took place systematically and identically. First readthroughs were coded using highlighting of generalized phrases and wording relevant to this study and took place within 48 hours of each interview. After the first readthrough and coding, the transcript was filed. Once interview transcriptions started to code similarly and there were no anomalies in the responses to the interview questions, I assumed saturation (Bleich & Pekkanen, 2013) was met and interviews ceased. In addition, throughout the process, I continually checked in for reflection and conference with my mentor, and dissertation Chair, Dr. Stadtlander. Together we determined whether the saturation was due to consistent answers or if it was the interviews themselves that caused similar answers.

The second readthroughs and coding took place post-interviews. During these readthroughs, I looked for descriptions that applied to the research questions directly. I then developed a coding scheme which took the layers of code and condensed them onto a table using the research questions as titles for each category, thereby mapping answers to suit the purpose of narrowing data to usable fragments (Christians & Carey, 1989). To accentuate the reliability of essential themes and codes, I read a clean copy of each transcript, highlighted them again, and compared them to the previous reads. This ensured I had not skipped important data which is recommended by Bleich & Pekkanen, 2013 as well as Saldana, 2019.

During the data collection and coding process, I kept a journal that detailed the process, the results of the process, the experiences during interviews, and any other pertinent information. After the coding process I examined the journal and placed any corresponding notes or details that were pertinent to the study on the table highlighted in a different color. These notations provided crucial insight and illuminated any biases that appeared in the coding process. Coding provided a way of taking data from the interviews and putting them in order, making it easier to find themes or trends (Christians & Carey, 1989), additionally, coding kept the qualitative method of research reliable as there was a format to the data that was visible and a pathway to the conclusion that simplified or condensed the information and deleted out bias from the researcher as there was so much information within a single interview (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Elliott, 2018; Miles et al., 2014; Saldana, 2019).

Definitions

Altruism: caring for another without regard of self (Haski-Leventhal, 2009). *Also:* the act of increasing another's welfare wherein the act in and of itself; there is no other goal (Batson, 1991). *Also:* a tendency coming from within wherein a group or an individual is focused on giving a meaningful service to another person that is not a gain to oneself or ones' family (Smith, 2000).

*Attribute: "*regard something as being caused by or a quality or feature regarded as a characteristic or inherent part of someone or something ("attribute Definition of attribute in English by Oxford Dictionaries," n.d.)".

Civic Engagement: social action to encourage change at a local, national and international level (Bronstein & Mason, 2013). *Also:* working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivations to make that difference (Deen & Shelton, 2012). *Also:* promoting a quality of life within a community through political and non-political processes (Ehrlich, 2000). *Also:* individuals coming together to engage in activities to improve social life and enhance community well-being and selves as an important indicator of individuals' belonging and connection to social institution and groups (Farmer, 2006).

Civic Service: a type of civic engagement such as volunteering, within a formal organization (Bronstein & Mason, 2013).

Community: a perceived image of togetherness wherein those who participate feel associated to that image. What makes a difference between an individual being active or inactive in the community is the meaning or attachment they have with that image. (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009).

Community Cohesion: individuals have a sense of belonging, solidarity, trust and other dimensions that attribute to the attachment or willingness to be active within the collective (Levy et al., 2012).

Formal Volunteering: unpaid work carried out under auspice of an organization (Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007).

Generic Volunteer: people that freely give their time and energy in a manner that benefits another person, group or organization (Manning, 2010). *Also:* any unpaid work

engaged in by an individual or group with the intention of benefiting others (Manning, 2010).

Informal Volunteering: people oriented, task oriented both of which are correlated with motives for helping another and personal role identity (Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007).

Volunteer: "a person who does something, especially for other people or for an organization, willingly and without being forced or paid to do it ("Volunteer," n.d.)." *Also:* a proactive role that requires effort and time, it is not reactive (Wilson, 2000). *Also:* people who actively seek out opportunities to help others; may deliberate for considerable amounts of time about whether to volunteer, the extent of how they want to volunteer as well as the degree to which activities may fit with their own personal needs. An individual who may choose to make a commitment to an ongoing helping relationship that may extend over a considerable amount of time as well as entail a considerable personal cost of time, energy and opportunity (Pozzi et al., 2014).

Motivation: "a reason or reasons for acting or behaving in a particular way or a desire or willingness to do something; enthusiasm (*Motivation | Definition of Motivation in English by Oxford Dictionaries,* n.d.).

Volunteer Work: actions are part of a cluster of helping behaviors with entail more commitment than spontaneous assistance but are narrower in scope than when we help family or friends (Wilson, 2000). *Also:* any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or cause (Mojza et al., 2010).

Volunteer Motivation: the mediation variable between personal characteristic and action and volunteer services being a manifestation of prosocial behavior, defined as the act to provide services for people other than close relatives (M. Lai et al., 2013).

Volunteerism: a specific type of sustained, planned, pro-social behavior that benefits strangers and occurs within an organizational setting (Pozzi et al., 2014). *Also:* a manifestation of pro-social behavior, defined as the act to provide services for people other than close relatives. These acts satisfy societal needs for a labor force (Lai et al., 2013).

Social Capital: refers to the varied connections people have to one another and these connections increase the likelihood of engagement in volunteerism (Kelly, 2013).

Social Change: a deliberate process of creating and applying ideas, strategies, and actions to promote the worth, dignity, and development of individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, and societies (Schulz, n.d.). *Also: "...*change in social structure, social order, social values, certain customs and traditions, socio-cultural norms, code of conduct, way of conducting oneself in the society, standards, attitudes, customs and traditions of the society and related factors take place… ("Social Change," 2016)**."**

*Social Services: "*an activity designed to promote social well-being*... specifically:* organized philanthropic assistance (such as counseling, job training, or financial support) (*Dictionary by Merriam-Webster: America's Most-Trusted Online Dictionary*, n.d.)."

Assumptions

Assumptions were built-in and provided which supported this study regarding what elements could be accepted as true or plausible in premise, research, and conclusions (Flick, 2009; *Stating the Obvious*, n.d.). It was assumed, for example, that participants who were recruited through the advertisements and by word-of-mouth would be true to the requested variables.

It was assumed that all the participants would be open, honest, and willing to provide insight into what motivated them to volunteer for the organizations they chose and that they would be willing to answer the interview questions to the best of their knowledge using their own personal volunteer journey within their rural community. It was also assumed that in such a rural area, that at least fifteen participants would be identified and interviewed until the data reveals saturation in the replies. Another assumption is that the choice to volunteer was a personal one to each participant.

Personal bias was identified and accounted for and precautions were taken to keep personal notation, views and opinions separated from the research data and conclusions. To do this I used bracketing as previously mentioned, these efforts increased the reliability and plausibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018) of this research.

Scope and Delimitations

The area that was a focal point of this research is a rural area in the Pacific Northwest about 90 to 100 minutes away from the nearest metro areas. The U.S. Census Bureau classified rural as populations, housing, and territories that are not included in urban or urban cluster areas, or anything with less than 50,000 people (Vilsack, 2013).

The two largest townships have populations of less than 50,000 and both house state universities and are essentially nonmetro as the population shifts by about 10,000 to 12,000 people and each September and May, respectively (beginning of the school year and end of the school year). There are smaller communities surrounding these two university towns as well as farming communities or homesteads, and the permanent residents commonly call the two larger communities as well as their surroundings rural. This area is local to me and therefore was chosen for ease of access and familiarity. This is discussed further in Chapter 3.

Recruitment for participation was active in all the areas and participation was limited only to those volunteering within this specific region and actively volunteering at least 5 hours per month and that they had been volunteering for at least one year. Individuals under 18 years of age and non-English speakers were excluded.

Significance

Results from this study revealed the motivational attributes of rural volunteers. The significance of attaining this knowledge is twofold. First, volunteer organizations can use the results for creating recruitment and retention programs within rural communities that would increase their volunteer workforce. Considering stakeholders requests which include significant details such as demographics, social needs, and organizations available to perform the duties needs and better definitions of the needs, responsibilities, and trainings needed to insure their monies are used effectively in service to communities (Zollo et al., 2019) This is highly beneficial for increasing financial support. Secondly, should the results lead to a larger volunteer workforce, increased provisions and more

accessible social services to those in need (Principi et al., 2016) would theoretically follow.

These outcomes create the opportunity for positive social change. Community members who help each other tend to become empowered due to developing pride and responsibility for each other due to the work and acceptance of work provided (Dass-Brailsford et al., 2011; Kelly, 2013; Kroll, 2011; Levy et al., 2012; Wilson, 2000). This pride and responsibility can also occur when members of a community, in this case rural, help others in the community better their life circumstances.

Limitations

Limitations for this study were situations or circumstances that were out of my control and that could have influenced the results or recruitment of participants (Bleich & Pekkanen, 2013; Elliott, 2018; Mosley, 2013). Cancelled or no-shows during the interview process as well as participants who stop the interview mid-way would have limited the number of responses and while this was not a crucial event that happened, I did have two participants who originally wanted to be interviewed but one did not answer the scheduling email and the other did not want to participate via telephone. Another limitation involved location used for the interviews. It would have been beneficial to interview participants in their own communities and in a public area such as a coffee shop or a library to personalize the interview which I assumed would elicit more in-depth answers to the questions as well as create a report between myself and the participant that did not happen in the telephonic interviews. I reflected on the pilot interviews compared to the telephonic interviews and this was apparent. The limitation on conducting in

person interviews was due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) which caused a shut-down of public gatherings as well as face-to-face gatherings.

Summary

Discovering what motivational attributes rural volunteers have in common provides organizations opportunities to develop recruiting and retention programs that are focused on and support those in rural communities. There is a lack of research regarding the area of rural volunteering as well as a decline in federal and statewide funding for social service organizations that have volunteer workforces (Davies et al., 2018; Farmer & Fedor, 2001; Hyde et al., 2018; Nesbit et al., 2017) and therefore this research filled a gap. Chapter 2 includes an in-depth overview of the literature.

This chapter introduced a research project wherein interview transcripts of semi-structured interviews of rural volunteers in a Pacific Northwest region of the United States would explain motivational attributes related to volunteering. Chapter 1 included a summary of the project as well as the overall framework of the research, nature of the study, and limitations and scope of the research project. Also included were pertinent definitions used throughout research.

The volunteer process model was used to structure questions during the interview process, and three theories were used for data coded from transcripts of those interviews. The theories were the social theory, ecological theory, and social capital theory. Utilizing these four frameworks threaded the relationships between rural living individuals in the Pacific Northwest, their motivation to volunteer within their communities, and decision-

making processes including the decision to volunteer and the decision to continue to volunteer.

The interviews were recorded and then transcribed within 24 hours of their completion. The transcripts were coded for the first time within 48 hours. The coding process was done three times. The first was directly after transcription, the second was after 15 interviews were completed, and the third was a clean copy transcription to insure nothing was missed and transcriptions were treated the same. This information was balanced with a research journal in which I documented as per each interview, coding processes and any bias or misconstrued information. The goal was to produce data that was transparent and meaningful and transcribed accurately what participants said, as per Miles et al (2014).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Communities in rural areas are submersed in challenges; jobs are few, poverty is high, single parenting is a commonality with little access or motivation for attending school and/or a higher education or skill facilities (Davies et al., 2018; Cromartie, 2019). Social services like mental and health services, childcare, employment, as well as services to assist with gaining employment may not be accessible (Butt et al., 2017; Moore et al., 2016). These challenges create opportunities for organizations to recruit and train volunteers to provide needed services to those who are are most afflicted by these challenges, and due to reduction in funding for services as well as for non-profit social service organizations there is a need for a growth in volunteer workforces, reciprocally, there is a need for the organizations to sustain and positively support the volunteers within those workforces. When communitiy members commit to providing assistance within their own communities and are encouraged and supported while assisting there is an opportunity to help change social inequalities.

The earliest summation of rural life depicts a lifesyle that is based traditionally with positive values as well as intra-group cohesion and strong local bonds within the community versus anonimity, impersonal relationships and a complete division of peoples due to labor and wages (Wirth, 1938). The purpose of this qualitative research project was to identify motivational attributes of individuals who volunteer in the rural Pacific Northwest using one-on-one semi-structured interviews. This micro-level inquiry focused on the phenomenon (Jupp, 2006) of volunteering but from the standpoint of

engaging conversation between the volunteer and myself. Interviews were recorded and attribute and values coding was used for interview transcriptions. Data included personal reflections of rural volunteers regarding their experiences which could enhance the quality of motivational attribute outcomes.

A volunteer workforce save communities money, bring people together to change or strengthen a common goal, and provides an opportunities for development of these communities as well as reciprocity of care and knowledge (Barati et al., 2013; Caprara et al., 2012; Guan & So, 2016; Tajfel, 1982). A well-developed volunteer workforce that strives to retain its volunteers at the level and by the decree of what works for and by the volunteers encapsulates the ability to socially change the needs at hand. When needs of communities are met, the community will grow stronger and change elements that are failing (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007b, 2007a; Keltner, 2017). Creating and maintaining a volunteer workforce in rural areas has its own set of challenges, yet still include the common threads of building trust, volunteering due to socially accepted needs, and networking.

In rural areas, it is common for the community to rely on volunteers or volunteer organizations for social services such as food, shelter, healthcare, protection, fire and EMS services, and childcare (Cromartie, 2019). Social service issues that involve the environment, education, transportation, and dissemination of information for optimal health or job opportunities, networking such as farmer's markets and social gatherings, and libraries which provide resources such as free Internet, tax information, resources for employment or communal activities are also part of rural living (Moore et al., 2016;

Svendsen & Svendsen, 2016). Pride and trust has been found to exist in rural communities as has a reluctance to request social services, however, due to the volunteers commonly being from the same communities there is a general understanding and usually, a gracious acceptance of assistance (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007a, 2007b). Volunteers are commonly known within their rural communities to be committed to their organization and due to the previously mentioned sense of trust there is an ability to develop relationships. Through these relationships, the building of and establishing of networking between resources and those in need is possible as is the ability to develop strategies for positive social change and the building and regrowth of the vitality of these rural communities (Farmer & Fedor, 2001; Wirth, 1938).

This research specifically focused on rural volunteers in the Pacific Northwest about 90 to 100 minutes away from the nearest metro areas. The two largest populated areas within this distance house state universities and are essentially non-metro as the population shifts by about 10,000 to 12,000 people between September and May (beginning of the school year and end of the school year). There are smaller communities surrounding these two university towns, and permanent residents commonly call the two larger communities as well as their surroundings rural. Determining motivational attributes would then be used to entertain options of recruiting and retaining volunteers.

Chapter 2 describes strategies used to search the literature and a comprehensive overview of literature pertinent to this project. The theoretical frameworks guiding the study were the volunteer process model, social identity theory, ecological theory, and social capital theory.

Literature Search Strategy

This review includes focused research spanning between 2010 and 2018 with theoretical references from as early as 1979. The articles I choose were highlighted through search filters that included the date, full-text and peer-reviewed journals, using the key terms: *volunteer, volunteerism, volunteering, motivation, concepts of motivation, activism, altruism,* and *civic engagement in relation to quality of life, civic engagement, civic participation, life satisfaction, role identity, motives* and *volunteering, social identity, social identity and volunteerism, social identity and volunteer, social identity and volunteers, ecological systems theory, ecological approach to volunteerism, volunteer process model, volunteer process model and rural volunteers, volunteer process model and volunteering, social networking and volunteerism, quality of life and volunteering, motivation to volunteer, volunteerism and community, volunteerism and rural community, volunteer motivation, definition of volunteering, definition of volunteerism, rural volunteer and United States, volunteer and gender, volunteer and marital status, volunteer and race, volunteer and ethnicity, volunteer and parenting, volunteer and education, volunteer and religion, volunteer and age, volunteer work in rural areas, volunteer retention, social capital theory, social capital theory and motivation,* and *social capital theory and volunteerism*.

Highlighting the terms *older populations of rural volunteers* resulted in the study by the Points of Light Foundation (2004) titled: *Volunteering in Under-Resourced Rural Communities;* this was a somewhat valuable resource as my study progressed. I utilized Google Search to define the term: “rural” complicating things by the indecisiveness of

government agencies to pinpoint a strong definition. With this defined search, I determined that that rural communities are not a focal point of research unless the study includes topics such as childhood poverty, homelessness, or unemployment.

The databases and search engines that were used were: Expanded Academic (via Topic Finder), PsycArticles, EBSCOHost; Human Services, Academic Search Complete, Google Scholar, and Google. It is interesting to note that the first search (motivation/rural/women/volunteer) in the Walden University Libraries Expanded Academic vault produced the notice: "Your library's collection of 36,146,897 documents was searched and no results matching your search term(s) were found" providing the conclusion that this study would be valued. Due to the lack of research found in my original scope *Rural Women Volunteers,* I chose to focus on all rural volunteers and not just women. I then narrowed the basis of study to my local rural area.

I requested assistance from the Walden University librarian to help establish terminology and make sure I exhausted all appropriate searches. The terms the librarian sent back were the same as mine suggesting my searches were exhaustive.

Theoretical Framework

In this theoretical review, attention is drawn to four frameworks or theories of thought that were used in the present study to determine motivational attributes of rural volunteers: volunteer process model, social identity theory, ecological theory, and social capital theory. This quad of theories drew on the relationship between individuals and their rural communities as well as what may have driven their motivation to volunteer.

The volunteer process model provides a functionalist approach that shows how the perceived notion of the existential importance of volunteering defines the decision to volunteer (Dass-Brailsford et al., 2011; Marta et al., 2006; Omoto et al., 2010). The social identity theory defines the relationship between the definition of self the volunteer applies to the role and the action forthwith of volunteering (Guan & So, 2016; Wilson, 2000; Wilson & Musick, 1999) as well as the connection of self to the community relationships and the motivation behind wanting to make a difference (Mojza et al., 2010).

The ecological theory has been used by sociologists, psychologists and human development theorists since its conception and introduction by developmental specialist, Urie Bronfenbrenner (1977). Bronfenbrenner's work looked at the relationships that individuals develop over their lifespan from the most intimate (husband/wife/child) to those much more abstract (organizational/government/policymakers). Volunteering is an organic interaction between individual, co-volunteers, the organization itself and those that are benefiting from the work. The process and selflessness of volunteering develops the community and enhances opportunities for those in the community to give back; the ecological theory stipulates as to the development of these interpersonal relationships.

The social capital theory focuses on the reciprocity of social relationships individuals develop and the personal outcomes that they have learned or gained from those relationships (Aharony, 2016; Coleman, 1988b; Engbers et al., 2017). Similar to the ecological theory, the social capital theory engages the idea of social interactions by individuals with groups as well as groups within the social construct itself and suggests

networking, social norms, and trust are outcomes that individuals seek (Aharony, 2016; Ferragina & Arrigoni, 2017; Gelderblom, 2018; Mahmood, 2015).

Volunteer Process Model

The volunteer process model is a functionalist approach that emphasizes the role of motivation, the diversity of motivation and the individual volunteer. Usually, according to Penner and Finkelstein (1998), the motives that incur for individuals to volunteer rely a great deal on their past/present experiences, the current circumstances that they are in and their personal and/or social needs. Determining how to cultivate the motivation for volunteering as well as define selfless motivation has direct implications for the relationship between the volunteer and the organization/s for which they chose to volunteer. This model has three stages, the Antecedent Stage, the Experiences Stage and the Consequences Stage. These stages are driven specifically by psychological and behavioral connections between the individual, the relationships between the volunteers, the relationship between the individual and the organization and the relationship between the volunteers and the organization (Clary et al., 1998; Phillips & Phillips, 2010).

Seeking to volunteer is a personal decision as is the organization the individual choses to volunteer for. Everyone's decision coincides with the Antecedent Stage of the volunteer process model. The decision to volunteer involves or regards the personality of the individual, the social service they would like to assist and how it affects their motivation and tendency to choose an organization (Clary et al., 1998; Greenslade & White, 2005; Houle, Sagarin, & Kaplan, 2005; Kelly, 2013). These decisions fall upon

personal attributes guided by unique individual choice as well as personal background and development.

Once the individual has followed through with their motivation to volunteer and has chosen the organization of which to do so; relationships begin to build within the organization. These relationships, although personalized are generalized between volunteers and members of the organization, between volunteers themselves and often between the volunteer and those they may be helping. This is the Experiences Stage of the volunteer process model and often includes satisfaction indicators and rewards which are intrinsic and extrinsic. These indicators often determine whether an individual continues to volunteer within the organization they originally joined, moves to another, adds another, or ceases to volunteer at all (Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007; Principi et al., 2016; Ramdianee, 2014).

Once an individual has committed to volunteering with an organization, they often experience personal changes in how they perceive life; how they perceive themselves in the community and larger society, and how they view the environment in which they are working (Clary et al., 1998; Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007). Perceptions cross over and there are often different thoughts and attitudes toward residents they encounter during the volunteer task. This stage of volunteering is called the Consequences Stage of the Volunteer Process Model. This stage includes changes in attitude, knowledge, and behaviors of the volunteers; those that receive the services from the volunteers and the relationships between all the involved parties (Omoto et al., 2010). These fluctuations of thought and insight often have ramifications greater than the

individual expected in views of the work and/or the community they worked in. These views and the overall assistance they've provided start the social change process (Pozzi et al., 2014). This process threads through the relationships made.

The facilitation of these relationships is two-fold between the choice of recruitment strategies and the ability to incorporate positive retainment practices. Non-profit organizations, for example, are dependent on volunteers to join their workforce to defray costs, fill positions of necessity, complete tasks needed for community service as well as to raise money. Volunteers for these organizations depend on the underlying motivational tagline, circumstance, or goal to become committed to working for and toward. These volunteers work for the reward of empowering their sense of self and accomplishing goals for the greater good (Cady et al., 2018; Keltner, 2017; Selenko et al., 2020). This is a reciprocal relationship which signifies why it is critical for organizations to know what motivates the volunteer to come and join their workforce and suffice to say provide them with enticing ways to add to their strategies for recruitment and develop and build retention goals (Lorente-Ayala et al., 2020; Mojza et al., 2010). The volunteer process model assists in these methods by assessing volunteers, their diversity, the diversity in their motivations, i.e., motivational attributes, and the differences between the types of organizations and the work they may offer to the volunteer (Omoto et al., 2010). Utilizing this model as a framework for this study helped to define the reciprocal relationship between the volunteer, and the organization, and what motivates the relationship.

Phillips et al. (2010) described distinct motives behind volunteering and the stages a volunteer processes through after making the decision and committing to an organization. These authors classify motives under the headings: social, career, understanding, values, protective, and enhancement. Each of these classifications is individualized and personal according to the volunteer process model and, as mentioned before, occurs in three stages Antecedent, Experience, and Consequence. This rationale related directly to the goal of this study in that it questions the motivations behind the personal decisions to volunteer developing thought to those attributes. Clary et al. (1999, 2002) developed an inventory that was used as a reference guide for this current study as it paralleled the specific variables key to this study. This inventory, or reference guide, provided a fundamental resource for the development and writing of the interview questions. It ensured the questions were research-based, volunteer specific and attuned to gathering information specific to this work. In addition, it assured that the questions were appropriate for this mode of research, all of which were critical to the successful implementation of this qualitative study. This inventory model illustrates the reciprocal relationships between rural volunteers, volunteers in rural areas, and the communities in which they are members. In addition, it includes the relationships between the volunteers providing service to organizations and therefore their representation in this study will be reflective of these communities. These relationships provided cohesion to the role due to commonalities in motivational attributes of volunteers and their abilities to act and provide alternative ways to implement services and aid to those in need.

An interview process was the data collection mode of research for this project and the questions reflected the motivations or psychological functional needs (social, career, understanding, values, protective motives, and life enhancement) and are defined below (Clary et al., 1998; Clary & Snyder, 1999; Phillips & Phillips, 2010):

- Social, wherein there is benefit to esteem and connection due to the spending of time with friends, creating new relationships, strengthening ties to the community, and gaining approval and/or admiration from other individuals sometimes with whom status and prestige are known.
- Career, wherein the individual realizes job-related benefits and growth in the actions or tasks they take on during volunteering.
- Understanding, wherein volunteering is a way to develop, gain, and refresh or practice knowledge, skills and abilities sought after in life situations.
- Values, wherein the individual expresses altruistic and/or humanistic reflection.
- Protective motives, wherein the individual finds a reduction of guilt or negates the difficulties of life by the positivity of volunteering. As pertaining to the difficulties of those assisted as well as one's own difficulties.
- Enhancement, wherein the volunteer contains that they have gained personal satisfaction, growth, and heightened esteem by their actions.

Social Identity Theory

The volunteer process model provided a reflection into the importance of the individual's role identity within a community or volunteer organization while the social

identity theory applied a deeper reflection on how the individual feels their relationship to the group contributes to their sense of self, self-esteem, and sense of belonging. Three variables contributed to this theory of social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and helped to designate and define the key coding words that guided the analysis of the interview transcriptions. These variables will reflect:

1. The individual must have internalized their membership within the group as an aspect of their self-concept,
2. The social situation must be such to allow for an intergroup comparison and
3. The in-groups do not have the need to compare themselves with external groups.

An individual's social identity is gleaned from specific roles which fulfill their sense of belonging or that they are enveloped in due to matters of circumstance from multiple strains of their life spanning between familial roles, educational roles and societal roles (Farmer & Fedor, 2001; L Kulik, 2006). Once the individual has chosen to fully adopt the role of volunteer into their personal life their commitment to the chosen organization and their community in which they volunteer increases (Hartenian & Lilly, 2009; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998).

The social identity theory directly links the identity a volunteer claims or perceives as volunteer to their self-esteem and self-evaluation (Caprara et al., 2012; M. Lai et al., 2013). This personal assessment of the individual's psychological/motivational needs and how these needs relate to the development of roles within the life of the individual is motivated by the selfless act of volunteering. This act requires intrinsic

and/or extrinsic reward from the engagement in the form of either interpersonal needs to assist the organization or to commit tangible social change to compel their continuing will to give (Deen & Shelton, 2012; Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007; Lau et al., 2019; Marta et al., 2006; van Ingen & Wilson, 2017). Volunteering nurtures a basic human need of companionship by placing the individual in a group wherein the nature of the work itself has a common goal. In doing the work the individual naturally gains admiration and approval from friendships (Cady et al., 2018) outside of the volunteer work as well as from within. This admiration and approval are frequent and common denominators for motivating an individual to continue in a role; in this case a volunteer role (Dutt & Grabe, 2014).

Volunteering often bridges or strengthens an individual's employment or employment skills thus fulfilling a need for career stability and or advancement or job-related benefits carried from the unpaid work to the paying job. Sometimes due to the nature of the volunteer work individuals may advance in their paying job because they have learned new and advanced skills and in addition the experience of volunteering is a positive attribute that an employer looks upon (Mojza et al., 2010; Yamashita et al., 2017). In addition, individuals have an innate curiosity that when applied to the volunteer experience provides satisfaction for the need to learn new skills and develop new knowledge and understanding of what the individual needs are for which the group the organization advocates (Deen & Shelton, 2012; Zanbar & Itzhaky, 2013).

Volunteer organizations strategize creating a better standard of living in a community and this garners the individual's need to protect others (Brunell et al., 2014;

M. Lai et al., 2013; Phillips & Phillips, 2010). In helping those who are not as fortunate as themselves the volunteer is protecting these individuals as well as building their innate sense of self through charitable acts (Butt et al., 2017; C. Magnuson, personal communication, 2017). This personal and human need to enhance oneself provides opportunity for recruitment as well as personal growth while expanding one's esteem and self-efficacy (Caprara et al., 2012; Word & Carpenter, 2013; Zanbar & Itzhaky, 2013). The volunteer role fulfills these needs by reaching out to organizations and to provide self-less acts of kindness and service. These individuals that want to volunteer utilize their knowledge, skills, and abilities to benefit others and in turn the psychological need that is subconsciously lacking is enhanced and/or developed (Dass-Brailsford et al., 2011).

Social identity theory implies that individuals who volunteer within their communities will experience, develop, and cherish the social contacts and connectedness while cultivating personal relationships within the organization, with others in the field, and with those they may be assisting. Kroll (2011) and Kelly (2013) acknowledged the importance of role-identity and its connection to civic engagement (volunteering) and that it is not the level of social expectation or where one is in the hierarchy of the volunteer organization but what the role provides to the individual's sense of self. This sense of self refers to the efforts that the social, emotional, and financial participation they choose to give to the organization of their choice. This efficacy provides a positive connection to healthier physical and is often related to a greater quality of life. As a continuum of definition "civic engagement" is equivalent to community service,

collective actions, political involvement and social change like the definition of volunteer as the actions usually fall under non-paid work (Farmer & Piotrkowski, 2009; Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014; Vecina et al., 2013). Throughout this research the terms volunteering and civic engagement were presented synonymously.

Self-efficacy relates to an individual's personal beliefs, judgements (Bandura, 1977), attitudes, and motivations about actions they may or may not take in a situation wherein the community or individuals in a community are in need. Bandura (2000) connected self-identity and self-efficacy by theorizing that they are related by the person's connectedness to the group/community/organization. The perception of belonging or being valued as a member drives an individual in most instances to act accordingly with confidence in knowing they are capable, becoming organized and achieving goals that they desire (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007b; Caprara et al., 2012; Hartenian & Lilly, 2009; Vecina et al., 2013).

The collectivity of working together toward a common social change goal within an organization or for an organization provides a connectedness for the volunteer in two ways. The first is a connectedness to the goal and the organization transfixed behind the goal and the second form is to the other volunteers (Butt et al., 2017; Selenko et al., 2020). Working in both these capacities toward a common goal creates camaraderie and relationships. This motivation to enhance the live(s) of an individual, or individuals, within a group through this change provides a status and an identity for an individual (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007a; Dutt et al., 2014). Identity development such as this is deemed a collective engagement (Nieves, 2012) and connects the individual to their

community not due to the level or status that they hold in the organization but by the social, emotional, and financial participation they provide (Kelly, 2013).

Volunteering often exceeds social expectations and roles and it is not unusual to be provided with extrinsic gratification due to the public nature of these extra-curricular actions. It is then an uncommon role for the average person to break normal societal expectations and define themselves in a selfless and civic participatory role and in-turn these humanitarian goals provide a deeper connection to their community and a greater sense of social identity within that society (Kelly, 2013; Kroll, 2011). Tajfel (1982) summized that an individual's sense of who they are develops or is seen through the memberships they have at any given time. Volunteer memberships accentuate and radicalize those societal rules or roles by creating a selfless position and thus, once a group member, the individual adopts the identity and action of those memberships and then there are intrinsic and extrinsic motivators to continue.

Ecological Theory

The ecological theory provides a notion that links relations from across an individual's lifespan by instantaneously linking relational or relationship systems (micro, meso, exo) that everyone develops over time (L Kulik, 2006; Pozzi et al., 2014). These individuals are motivated to selflessly volunteer without requesting beneficial reward or regarding cost from themselves or their bank account (Mojza et al., 2010; Wilson, 2000) which in and of itself creates a growing projection of self within the many systems in which they are immersed.

Bronfenbrenner (1977) suggested that to understand the individual and their development one must examine the multi-person systems of interactions within all settings of that individual's life. Volunteering provides a microscopic look at one setting of a person's life and ascertains their response to this action as well as their motivation for doing so provides an enlightenment as to their motivational attributes providing a basis for this study. The complexity of these relationships in a rural community include the building of trust between those who have need and those who are volunteering to help them with that need. This trust then is pivotal as it requires those who have all their needs met to reach across to those who do not and vice versa and in rural communities this gap is visibly apparent and not necessarily designated by domiciles or school distinctions.

The social identity theory piece of this research focuses on the roles of the individual and the individual in the volunteer groups and organizations and how this effects the individual's self-identification. The ecological theory helps focus on the relationships between those roles. For example, in the social identity theory the role of "Mother" has its commonalities in that stereotypically a Mother clothes, feeds, and provides safety for her children. Enmeshed in this role of "Mother" are the interactions with the children, father, teacher, coaches, doctors, and each provides or expects "Mother" to fit into these differing roles and the individual develops a sense of belonging and worth to this role. The ecological theory applies to the present study by combining the personal attributes and motivations of the individual to the community attachments they develop due to volunteering. This is an external efficacy wherein there is a give and take relationship and that as a volunteer a difference or betterment can take place because

of that relationship (Kelly, 2013).This relationship is reciprocal, wherein the volunteer provides services and the community provides a sense of belonging (Omoto et al., 2010; Parkinson et al., 2010; Wilson & Musick, 1999).

Bronfenbrenner (1977) provided a nested-systems theory into how an individual becomes interconnected to their social systems and how they process throughout the lifespan between or in relationships with these systems and those that are contained in them. Below is a summary of the nested systems:

The Micro-system: the relationships between the individual and their environment. These relationships are always revolving around the individual and are identified as specific roles and are dominated by place, time, activities, and participants within each setting.

The Meso-system: the interrelationships within major settings that the individual is involved in during a specific time in life, this system is a network of an individual's microsystems.

The Exo-system: as the prefix alludes to this is the outer world that affects the individual but that they are not necessarily involved with, the exo-system is that which influences the Meso- and Micro- systems and indirectly influences the individual such as policy, law, and or/athletic programs.

The Macro-system is that which emerges from culture and subculture, the context that affect life for the individual.

Bronfenbrenner (1977) called these norms "blueprints" (p. 515) that the cultures and subcultures cultivate for the individual: economics, education, legal systems, politics,

and societal norms. These cultures or systems provide the motivations and meaning to what the individual does for agencies and the role they play within each.

The work the individual does in the community as a volunteer whether in groups or individually, formal, or informal will depend on the relationships that have been developed through these systems. During the interactive process, there is instantaneous and continual growth for the individual as well as the inter-connections between groups and therefore the systems (Bushway et al., 2011). In addition, the commitments of the relationships that are developed through the systems involving the individual can be interpreted at the highest level in that the individual then may manipulate the macro-systems by re-writing or expanding policy and therefore creating social changes in their communities as well (Levy et al., 2012).

Social Capital Theory

Volunteering develops relationships between individuals, between the individuals and the organizations as well as between the volunteers and the community and/or people that they are providing a social service for. Volunteers also gain and share skills, knowledge, and abilities through volunteering. All the personal, organizational and community gains that are accumulated through these relationships are considered social capital and reciprocal betwixt those involved in the act and those receiving social services as well as the achievement of objectives or goals by some organizations that could not do so without volunteers. The historical foundation of the social capital theory is this reciprocity, the bonds of trust that are built between all parties involved and in the long run the social change that occurs in communities wherein those bonds are unspoken as

well as for those that receive public accolades according to this theory (Coleman, 1988b; Engbers et al., 2017; Hommerich, 2015; Mahmood, 2015; Peachey et al., 2015; Randle et al., 2014; Wilson & Musick, 1999; Zanbar & Itzhaky, 2013).

This theory encompasses levels of productivity (volunteering) at the micro and macro levels specifically, individuals, organizations, and society. This idea encapsulates the values and norms of the volunteer into the larger body of a community and this investment in one's neighborhood does not depreciate but benefits throughout generations (Aziz, 2015). Individuals that commit to volunteering become connected in a network through acquaintances and these networks can only develop through the investment into relationships. These relationships transform whichever social service has drawn them into helping, and thereby changing it by providing personal assistance (emotional investment) and/or financial support (time and/or money) (Aharony, 2016; Coleman, 1988a; Engbers et al., 2017).

As mentioned, social capital, in reference to volunteering, is the reciprocal gains that each party accumulates through the act of volunteering. In relationship to motivational attributes this is clearly an important concept in that an individual may or may not recognize that they are motivated by ulterior gains, such as meeting new people, feeling recognized, or gaining a skill, not just their initial altruism.

The rationale behind the decision to look at these three theories regarding the rural volunteer was due to their similarities in context. Each theory, while referring to the individual, considers precise points of motivation regarding the individual's decision to volunteer or not to volunteer. The volunteer process model directly correlates with this

concept of volunteer motivation. The social identity theory refers to the individual incorporating their personal needs and underlying attributes that may motivate them to become a volunteer. As a conduit connecting the theories the ecological theory creates an association between the individual and the social systems that occur for them within their environment. The three theories coincide with each other due to the individual being the target point of study and noting that intrinsic and extrinsic values that that individual perceives come from the surrounding environments they are exposed to as well as the individual's personal and emotional development.

Literature Review

Poverty stricken communities are less likely to have access to social service organizations and due to the lack of transportation, social cohesion, and economic crisis of rural areas there is an inability to rise above the many obstacles people face (Meade, 2014). The rural area that has been designated for this project has a highly concentrated poverty base, both counties registering at the highest concentration in their states (Parker, 2019). In regarding the services in these two counties there are two larger communities in the area and services are provided there, there is a lack of ability for services to be accessed from those living outside of those areas. Utilizing volunteer efforts for connecting those in need with services is a solution base, however determining what motivates people into volunteering in rural communities is a crucial asset that needs to be accessible to social service organizations to be able to recruit and retain volunteers.

In transition to presenting the literature base for this study it is important to note that there may be multiple motivational reasons for volunteering that are not completely

altruistic and selfless. Looking for social connections, developing skills outside of work or to strengthen those already learned, the desire to feel needed, and for the benefit of someone like a child or parent are some of the reasons individuals choose to volunteer or volunteer out of necessity (Hager & Brudney, 2004). In this section efforts were made to explain the research as well as imply a definitive gap that this study addressed.

Volunteers

The term, volunteer, is the generic term for individuals who on their own freely participate in a cause or action by giving labor or financial backing at some level which is selfless in that it is benefiting others and wherein the individual conducting the work or providing finance is not compensated in any manner (Farmer & Piotrkowski, 2009; Manning, 2010; Wilson, 2000; Wilson & Musick, 1999). This term pertains to any activity, organization, or investment in human capital and does not discriminate across disciplines. Volunteering is a conscientious decision by an individual to use one's time, energy, and money to better a situation, place or help an individual's well-being. The aspects of volunteering include provisions of time, labor and expertise and are based on ranges of free will, availability, ability to nurture, a proximity to beneficiaries and most often a formal organization that recruits and processes the individuals and guides them to their task (Hustinx et al., 2010). With the definition being so broad many duties and acts of volunteering can be placed in the category but basically, volunteer work, is unpaid work (Keltner, 2017).

The justifications as to why people volunteer or provide unpaid work fall under three core principles: solidarity, democracy, and social cohesion. These principles limit

the volunteer work to the individual's free will to provide the work (Hustinx et al., 2010). Researchers do agree that this choice does not come from the individual's biological background and though it does not include any sort of payment; it is not slavery or forced labor and does not include kinship care or spontaneous acts of kindness. There is also a delineation between activism and volunteering in that activism targets specific structures behind a situation and seeks to change it while volunteering provides ongoing services (Haski-Leventhal, 2009).

Volunteering is a form of civic engagement to which individuals come together and participate in activities that will ultimately improve a determined situation. This productivity enhances the community around them as well as provides improvement to the individuals sense of belonging, social life, and gives them a connection to the organization they are participating in (Farmer & Fedor 2001; Farmer & Piotrkowski, 2009). Gilster (2012) and Lau et al. (2019) found that volunteerism improved the physical and psychological health of those they studied and theorized that it was due to the connections of social networking which provided new relationships and supports. Volunteering has positive effects for individuals in that people report happiness, life satisfaction and achievement, increased self-esteem, new friendships, and efficacy due to the mastery of a common goal and coincidentally due to the accolades, prestige, and social approval (Blackwood & Louis, 2012; Gilster, 2012; Wilson, 2000).

There are three approaches to volunteering: sociological, psychological, and political. Sociologically, understanding the social background of the volunteer and understanding that volunteering is a productive activity that serves certain functions and

meets the needs of those served. Psychologically, looking at volunteering from the perspective that humans, often naturally, want to help and therefore they want to take prosocial actions. Politically, volunteering can be looked at as civil action and as a necessary commodity needed by those organizations which are commonly non-profit that are ongoing and in need of assistance (Hustinx et al., 2010).

Hustinx et al. (2010) proposed five common personality traits that were notable in that they attended to the distinct individual differences in character between those who volunteer and those who do not volunteer. Social value, empathetic return, perspective taking, self-efficacy and positive self-esteem were the traits the researchers defined in this study so combined with knowledge, skills, and attributes that help the program succeed there would essentially be a cyclical system of positive reinforcement to the volunteer. These socially based individual skills and reciprocity between the helping and the helped are considered social capital. In addition, the relationship between the two develops a trust in the time of need situation and each gains a complexity of new socially acceptable norms (Hommerich, 2015).

Who then is the volunteer and why do they volunteer? From an economic standpoint, the volunteer is an individual that is available, eligible, and flexible at the very least. Volunteering is multi-dimensional (Hustinx et al., 2010) and treating each individual the same is not practical nor realistic. A typical volunteer processes through five phases: nominee (expressing an interest in an organization or project), newcomer (started in the volunteering mode and is learning the new role at their own pace), emotional involvement (volunteer experiences making a difference or determines there

are improvements to be made), established volunteer (this experience or role is part of the volunteers life, they can mentor others now and take on more duties and responsibilities), retiring (volunteer is ready to move to the next phase of life and passes the responsibilities to others) (Haski-Leventhal, 2009).

Most research projects with volunteers at their core are kindred to the current study in that they focus on one sub-set of individuals and across those projects there are common socio-demographic factors that are determined to be volunteer attributes. On varying levels, the research noted that the most frequent demographics are individuals who have a higher income, a higher education, are either employed or retired, and are family oriented. Education is the most consistent demographic across the breadth of research and religious affiliation and common social connections are also commonly found; in addition, most of the studies concluded that women are more apt to volunteer than men (Haski-Leventhal, 2009; Pearce, 1993; Wilson, 2000). From the standpoint of social capital theory a volunteer who fills a demographic is seeking to fulfill a need, develop trust between themselves and members of their community and the organization, find a formal membership within a group, interact with others who are seeking out the same capital as well as reflecting on their own altruistic abilities (Engbers et al., 2017).

Rural Volunteers

Relatively little literature has been published on the rural volunteer (Svendsen et al., 2016), especially in the United States. One study based in the United States is that of Deen et al. (2012), who conducted a study in a mid-sized south-west city in the United States, the population was 365,000 in 2008. The study was based on interviews with 15

participants, all from similar backgrounds, social standings, and life experiences. In this qualitative study, the researchers sought out individuals from a private preschool's Parent Teacher Association utilizing a snowball effect from membership lists. The study by Deen et al. (2012) provided the definition of volunteer, which did not adequately fit the rural population definition, but it held similarities in that the participants were interviewed, aligned with the Social Identity, Ecological, and Social Capital theories. It is, however, a good volunteerism model to refer to during this study due to the coverage of situational volunteerism, life experience influencing the motivation to volunteer and the uses of a model (civic volunteerism model) influencing the study.

Several articles used the volunteer process model to develop open-ended interview questions, determining demographical information in relation to intent to volunteer, determining the roles volunteering had in an individual's life, variables that one might approach research with, develop identifying determinates that might link motivations to volunteer, and life satisfaction outcomes (Boezeman et al., 2007, 2008; Brayley et al., 2014; Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007; Greenslade et al., 2011; Marta et al., 2006; Phillips et al., 2010).

There were different styles of collection for the data gathered in most of the studies which used the parameters of the volunteer process model. Some of the methods of data collection included: open-ended interviews (Allison et al., 2002), emailed or paper-copy mailing of the 30 item Volunteer Functions Inventory (Brayley et al., 2014), mailed survey to participants (Boezeman et al., 2008; Greenslade et al., 2005), personal dissemination and collection of the Volunteer Functions Inventory (Clary et al., 1999),

the development of a more informal Volunteer Functions Inventory in-person data collection (Finkelstein et al., 2007), and disseminating either in person or via other means of multiple questionnaires such as the Empowerment Outcomes Assessment and the Motivations for Volunteering Scale along with the Volunteer Functions Inventory (Kulik et al., 2001 & Lai et al., 2013). Due to the range of dissemination and demographical information as well as the completeness of what is covered by the Volunteer Functions Inventory from the volunteer process model this tool was used as a guide for developing interview questions for data collection in this study to determine the motivational attributes behind rural volunteering.

Social Identity and Volunteerism

The social identity theory contemplates a person's sense of who they are based on the social/familial groups they belong to. In addition, the theory capitalizes on the emotional significances of those groups, the status one holds in those groups and the adoption of the groups key identity features into the individual's own self-esteem and self worth (Tajfel et al., 1979). The present study resonates with this theory in that individuals belong to a group wherein volunteering is significant and resonates in a collective purpose (Selenko et al., 2020). In addition there is social status in rural living so merging each aspect will provide a symbiotic glimpse into rural volunteering motivations.

Dutt et al. (2014), used five archived global feminist interviews and researched the reasons how and why individuals choose to selflessly give of themselves to social change through volunteering. Their analysis focused on the construction, maintenance, and performance of volunteering to become activists and how this role affected their

identity processes. The conclusions, although the sample base was extremely small, demonstrated that the participation in a social cause movement creates a collective identity among members and a shared commitment to improve their situation. This connectedness with others provides the individual with a social identity that is formed through these memberships and an attribute of motivation reflected from the value that this role has in society, to enhance and sustain group statuses and wellbeing. The idea of collective engagement is that the teaching of new skills indicative of the organization, as well as creating a place to belong, are key attributes to motivating and retaining volunteers (Nieves, 2012). It can be inserted that the social capital gains of trust and cohesion are also then key attributes and an assumption can be made that this collective of volunteers will also have an unconscious number of acceptable hours and hierarchy within the group; the ramifications of which can be interpreted as a collective good which resonates on the elemental goals of this project.

Volunteer community experience creates a pathway for open-minded evolution in the realm of an individual's social identity and this evolution reflects within the group or organization they are associated with during their volunteer commitment. The individual's shifting social identity cultivates positive, healthy relationships within the group, allowing the individual confidence in their worth as a member which translates the ability to join other similar social groups as well as detaching from any groups without undue harm or misunderstanding (Mojza et al. 2010). This same philosophy led Blackwood et al. (2012) to conduct a survey both online and face-to-face to determine how volunteers viewed themselves. The researchers proposed three distinct frames of

thought when administering the survey and drafted their questions accordingly. The frames of thought were: (1) I think of myself as an activist, (2) I am committed to being an activist, and (3) being an activist is NOT important to who I am. In the Blackwood et al. study, they found that being an activist held importance in the lives of the individuals but all three correlated with each other adding to the conclusion that individuals are motivated to volunteer for different reasons.

Individuals are involved in many social and interpersonal relationships and their interactions within these relationships guide them to volunteer opportunities as well as determine how they will respond to being in the organization or cause for which they have volunteered. Bronfenbrenner (1977) suggested that these systems of relationships are integral to defining the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of an individual as well as their values, morals, roles in other relationships, and their personal values; volunteering is a community experience, which according to Mojza et al. (2010), is an opportunity for social contact and connectedness as well as cultivating and refining new and current relationships. Volunteering allows the individual to detach from their work group and gain from working within their community another social construct in their personal relationship systems defined by Bronfenbrenner (1977).

Motivation and Volunteerism

Maintained throughout this chapter is the significance of the individual volunteer and their connectedness to their community and the actions they may take in assisting or helping that community in differing areas of need (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009; McNamara et al., 2013; Renzaho et al., 2012; Yeh et al., 2015). Boezeman et al. (2008) theorized that

organizational commitment driven by social identity and self-categorization is significant in an individual's motivation to volunteer. Further, they deemed that an organization that plays into an individual's pride and respect would have a higher rate of retention and positive volunteer morale. Reciprocally, an organization would be positively valued due to the significance of positivity coming from the volunteers within the community. Clearly dominated by the individual's desire to help their community but also perceiving the importance of their work as a valued member of the organization supports the idea of emotional and task-oriented support and nurtures well-being.

Hustinex et al. (2010) viewed volunteer motivation as both symbolic and functional where volunteers serving certain pre-existing needs in their community show a reflection of their own psychological needs being met. Citing Bronfenbrenner (1960) in their study, Hustinex et al. (2010) saw volunteerism as part of the Meso-system of Bronfenbrenner's nested systems theory. They described a volunteer ecology wherein the volunteer serves others by giving their skills, resources, and selfless will. There is a social solidarity between those who volunteer and altruism, generosity, compassion, social responsibility, a concern for others and community spirit represent each volunteer although the individual may be active in different organizations or agencies when the topic of "how do you spend your time" is a part of the conversation the nature of solidarity is apparent.

Motivation and Social Change

Efforts to create social change in a community takes collective action and to pursue these actions there needs to be not only a methodology and a systemic guide but a

motivation to do so. A motivation derived from self-efficacy in individuals who have joined efforts with an organization creates a group-efficacy which influences the whole psychologically and then in turn effects the individuals (Blackwood et al., 2012; McNamara et al., 2013). Those who identify as both a member of the community as well as someone who desires to or is actively bettering their community dominates as a support system and further challenges are easier to face in its entirety (McNamara et al., 2013). This collective pursuit ideology transmits successfully throughout this study. Through the one-on-one interview process, I intended to pinpoint attributes that individuals have that motivate them to volunteer and collectively I suspected to see a pattern of developing social change for this selected rural area.

As stated before, volunteers do not receive monetary or other compensations for their deeds, and as noted there are different benefits that are sought out by individuals who choose to volunteer; motives which are intrinsic and extrinsic and not always altruistic. The idea that volunteering is considered free labor then might be a contradiction and in utilizing this study organizations and leaders of community causes will have an awareness that to increase the motivation to volunteer is to increase recruitment. By providing and developing a program with symbolic rewards such as: thank you letters, prizes, publicity, appreciation meals, conference attendance, recognition at events, or gas/travel compensation tap into those ulterior motives (Keltner, 2017). This methodology is particularly effective when the organization chooses the method of symbolic reward according to the personality or psychological functional needs as previously discussed in this chapter (Phillips et al., 2010). Regarding these

symbolic rewards, monetary differences between agencies or organizations vary, it is recommended that a small part of the budget be designated for such rewards (Keltner, 2017). A phenomenon that Phillips et al. (2010) found in their study was that volunteers rated a free cookie as more desirable than a free meal as a reward, most noted that this was due to the financial constraints of most not-for-profit organizations.

An individual's motivational reasons to volunteer to create social change within their own community involves many variables including individual characteristics, organization efforts, and cultural norms (Hartenian & Lilly, 2009). These characteristics require an individual's social, emotional, and financial willingness to participate. This willingness to commit to an organization's methodology to meet the challenge of a cause indicates the individual's intentions. While their potential to remain involved reflects their community attachment and personal well-being (Vecina et al., 2013) often increasing their helping behaviors as well as their trust in social and governmental organizations. In addition, organizations that provide symbolic rewards customized to the individuals shows a relationship intimacy and the acknowledgement that the volunteer and their work is valued (Keltner, 2017). Volunteers often have a religious participation background as well which incorporates the latter into self-efficacy and quality of life matters (Kelly, 2013). Kelly (2013), also found that the energy placed into volunteering is reciprocally returned by increases life-satisfaction which relays to increased volunteer hours or volunteering for additional organizations or agencies (Warner et al., 2014).

Summary and Conclusions

Due to the lack of previous research, there is a need for a study on rural volunteers and their motivation to volunteer. One could surmise that there may be a high need for a volunteer workforce in all socioeconomic areas, however, the choice to study the rural Pacific Northwest was convenient for my research because the level of poverty and needs in this specific area are great and available volunteer organizations and agencies to recruit participants from are reasonably available. Upon concluding this research, I found that resulting information can be used to create a dialogue with volunteer organizations and agencies in the area in terms of how to actively recruit and retain volunteers which in theory should subsequently grow the volunteer workforce.

Motivational attributes pooled from participants from this rural area will assist organizations and agencies in focusing on recruiting new volunteers and actively retaining those already volunteering. In addition, this research can be duplicated in similar areas as well as expanded to urban areas. This has the potential to create social change in that growing the volunteer workforce meets the social needs of those seeking it and at a higher capacity.

The absence of research regarding rural volunteers and their motivational attributes created a need for this project. I also concluded that this research could lead to social change wherein needs and services are met by volunteers who have been actively recruited and are successfully retained, leading to improving these impoverished rural communities.

Chapter 3 includes information about the methodology for this project as well as its design and rationale. The proposed population is identified in detail, as is the method of selecting participants. The structure of the project and a description of the interview process and my roles as the researcher are discussed, as well as techniques used to select the sampling of volunteers who were interviewed. The chapter is detailed and written to allow replication.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the motivation of individuals who volunteer in the rural Pacific Northwest. Identifying the scope of importance this study had was crucial in that it was important to note that to circumvent the decline in financial backing for non-profit organizations and the increase of rural poverty that was discussed in chapter two and in return foreseeing an escalation in need for recruiting and retaining a volunteer workforce (Davies et al., 2018; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2019; Cromartie, 2019; Lorente-Ayala et al., 2020). This study, although it was localized to a single rural area, provides an understanding of the motivations behind rural volunteering than was available before, and subsequently, will lead to future research.

Creswell (2013) stated that qualitative studies allow the researcher to investigate from the perspective of the participants. Thyer (2009) said qualitative studies which contain interviews allow for flexibility and adaptability of questions and number of interviews, with this malleability it was logical to use interviews as the investigative procedure for this work. Qualitative interview processes also allowed for generalized conclusions as opposed to the quantitative approach which would be more precise in investigation and conclusions, not allowing for interpretive or descriptive analogies or summary (Elliott, 2018; Thyer, 2009). Coding was used to break down and map qualitative data as qualitative analysis provided a descriptive summary and a patterning to the data (Christians & Carey, 1989; Elliott, 2018). Use of semi-structured questions provided an opportunity for interview sessions to include focused and in-depth

discussions and detailed answers to questions (Westra & Aviram, 2013) as well as avoidance of bias (Langston, 2011).

Volunteering is a phenomenon that is a personal choice, therefore the one-on-one interview provided data that provided commonalities and similarities of choice and experience valuable to this project as was provided to each participant. The questions and venue allowed participants to provide insights regarding attitudes, experiences, perspectives, and stories that could not be gained through quantifiable information or by observation (Ryan et al., 2009).

Hycner (1985) drafted guidelines for the analysis of interview data and Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) developed a guide to IPA, both of which provided a foundation for the structure of the research and the data analysis. Notably, when using a fluid form of study such as an interview format, humans are unpredictable and not translucent and therefore the outcomes that I sought out in this study provided some predictable elements and some that were very unexpected. In addition, auditing records were kept to add to the preciseness of interpreting the participants answers and reactions to the questions (Ryan et al., 2009; Thyer, 2009).

Detailed results were used to help define the motivations of participants who are currently volunteering in the selected rural area as well as provide a foundation for future research. This chapter includes the proposed research design, methodology, justification for the study, interview questions, and rationale that was used to compile them as well as the process of transcribing the interviews and formulating the data from the interviews. This chapter includes my role as the researcher, issues of trustworthiness,

and ethical protection of participants' rights and anonymity. Furthermore, details of how participants were recruited to participate, and specific procedures used to interpret results are also included. The locale and rural area are explained.

Research Design and Rationale

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore rural individuals' motivation to volunteer within their communities. The qualitative design best fit the goals of this project and provided an approach that was more personal and directly relatable to this situation than quantifiable data. I used my local area in the rural Pacific Northwest for this research. This region is approximately 90 miles away from the nearest metro area and has been designated as rural by the USDA (Cromartie, 2019).

By choosing to use the qualitative design method for this research, I found commonalities in data gathered from one-to-one semi-structured interviews with active volunteers. This process allowed for some unanticipated questions and spontaneous reflection. Questions were asked and answered during one-to-one telephonic interview sessions that lasted approximately one hour. An audit trail beginning with concise records of participant demographics, location, time, consistent interview questions, recording procedures, and personal journal entries was maintained. This kept results and conclusions as precise and reliable as possible. Interview schedules, interview questions, and lead-in and prompting opportunities were used for each interview as suggested by Trochim (2005). Due to interviews being telephonic, I was able to take notes while participants answered questions. I transcribed audio recordings myself within one day of the initial interviews and notated any additional thoughts or

transitional information into the document using a varying font color for coding. Transcribing the interviews as quickly as possible after the interaction was key to fully encapsulating the intention of the question-and-answer session.

Once the transcription was completed, I followed the step-by-step format proposed by Hycner (1985). Hycner's step-by-step guidelines include the following: (1) transcription, (2) bracketing, (3) listening to the interview for a sense of the whole, (4) delineating units of general meaning, (5) delineating units of meaning relevant to the research questions, (6) training independent judges to verify the units of relevant meaning, (7) elimination of redundancies, (8) clustering units of relevant meanings, (9) determining themes from clusters of meaning, (10) writing summary for each individual interview, (11) returning to the participant and conducting a second interview, (12) modifying themes and summary, (13) identifying general and unique themes for all interviews, (14) contextualizing themes, and (15) developing a composite summary. As the researcher, I utilized the steps numbered 1-5, 8-9, and 12-15 from transcription to summarization and developed a sense of motivational attributes.

Reflecting on the qualitative approaches to research: basic, narrative, ethnography, phenomenology, and case study, I determined that the best approach to this research project was a basic qualitative study. After the interviews were coded the meaning was revealed regarding which experiences and processes the participants went through to acquire the role of volunteer (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The interview questions were short-answer and open-ended, and this allowed me to gain as much

information as possible that integrated the volunteering journey with the personal attributes of the individual. The rationale of choosing this approach was due to the idea of examining lived experiences that individuals have around a single phenomenon and therefore finding shared themes with the goal being an understanding of those experiences in relationship to the phenomenon of volunteering and what it means to experience it (Creswell, 2013). Using a basic qualitative approach to this research provided an opportunity to personalize the results to the social activity of volunteering (Hycner, 1985). Gained knowledge of how the volunteer reacts and processes this experience provided insight into the psyche of a volunteer thus making it easier for agencies to design recruitment strategies for those looking for an opportunity to volunteer as well as creating personalized support and guidelines for retention to nurture the volunteer which would in turn keep them involved in the process.

Research Questions

The goal of this project was to have a better understanding of the motivational attributes of the rural volunteer. I focused my research on my local area and it was my intent to create a pathway for future researchers to utilize this project in their own local communities furthering the opportunity for social change by growing the rural volunteer workforce to meet social service needs. Based on the desired outcomes of this study, as well as a review of the literature available, the following research questions that drove this study and the development of the interview questions included:

RQ1: What motivates individuals in the rural Pacific Northwest to volunteer?

RQ2: How do rural volunteers describe their experience as a volunteer?

Research Tradition

I chose the qualitative research method because it is a more personable research method than a quantitative methodology. My intent was to bring personalization from the volunteers to the reader and future researcher. I do acknowledge the value in having statistical analogies to accompany the personal but in this instance, I wanted to be familiar with the participants and listen to and recognize their volunteer journey. Creswell (2013) recognized the value in qualitative research work by drawing attention and viability to the structure of the work in that it prepares a construct of meaning to a phenomenon and a reasoning behind which the phenomenon takes place, and this value of meaning was the type of data most beneficial for this project. Finally, I wanted to use a qualitative methodology due to the flexibility of an interview session wherein there may be pre-determined questions, but should the participant have other information or instances to share there would not be a rigid quantitative data driven format. This effort provided a deeper and more unique perspective to the volunteering taking place in rural communities that is not available in current literature. It was my thought that this enlightenment would lead to new research and open opportunities for collaboration and growth of the volunteer workforce as well as build an awareness of the social change benefits of that workforce growth.

Role of the Researcher/Interviewer

As the researcher and therefore interviewer, my role during the interviews was to keep the intake of information continuous, the time managed, and the interchange of information and questions synchronous and on topic. It was also my responsibility to

achieve trustworthiness, credibility, transferability and dependability with the participant and subsequent readers of my research (Koch, 2006; Ryan et al., 2009). The interview schedule previously mentioned was crucial as was the ability to achieve rapport and trust quickly and effectively with the participants.

Each interview contained the same demographic inquiry and the same 18 questions and were performed telephonically as well as being recorded using a handheld tape-recorder for accuracy and consequent transcription. I did scribe while the participant was answering the question but only minimally and in my own shorthand. Recording the interview allowed for the flow of information to be synchronous, spontaneous, as well as being respectful to the participant by listening instead of constantly scribing. Directly after the interview, when the participant hung-up, I processed the procedure and interaction in a journal to record any nuances, thoughts, voice inflections, or other innuendos that I was thinking about or observed during the interview. When I was transcribing the recording, I included supposition, bias, experience, and observations from the reflective journal in a different font color and I used an additional font color when and if I recalled anything during transcription. I dutifully transcribed each interview within 48 hours of its conclusion. I then merged all of the answers in one document divided by research question.

The semi-structured, open-ended interview questions were asked in the same order with each participant. There was a high probability, with this style of interviewing process, for the need for improvisation due to two phenomena; either the participant

opted out of questions or as the questions were asked the participant engaged fully and relayed information in detail with needed follow up questions/comments.

These interviews were conducted telephonically instead of in person, due to the 2020 virus pandemic, and were all between 30 and 60 minutes. The interviews were informal and generalized allowing for storytelling but structured enough to avoid falling off topic too often. I looked for specific information and therefore narrowed and focused the information on those questions.

Utilizing the volunteer process model, I formulated questions focused on guiding the participants to stay on track as to their volunteer journey (pre/during/post) and the attributes they may share as rural volunteers. This process helped denote not only specific basis for defining or negating my research but helped me recognize when the research reached a saturation point and therefore enough participants. I determined the saturation point when the interview questions were garnering similar or identical answers. To determine this, I compared the information I used while setting up my coding identifiers with the answers I was getting from the participants. After interviewing 15 participants the answers, except the personal experiences, were similar enough to each other to see that my data was complete and further interviews were not necessary. Due to the nature of the questions, and the shift from in person to telephonic interviews the questions I originally choose did not allow the participants to reflect on their rural experiences in volunteering. Post-interview I reached out again to the participants and asked a follow-up question which then clarified this information.

I journaled after each interview to process my thoughts and suppositions about the interview. This included thoughts about the interview, the question-and-answer process as well as bulleted notes that highlighted answers or interpretations that were congruent with the research questions. Journaling also served as a conduit for channeling any bias or strictly individual opinions I developed that were not substantial or appropriately related to my research, this accompanied by the interview schedule allowed the trustworthiness and reliability giving credibility to my research. In addition, any extraneous or extraordinary data that comes into focus will be documented here.

The relationship between interviewer and interviewee was short, in this case approximately one hour and telephone interviews are not as personal. I indicated in my reflective journaling that participants often seemed rushed to get off the telephone, but that was my perspective due to the brevity of the answers and therefore I would not recommend telephonic interviewing should this project be replicated. The reflective journaling, while it provides insight into the experience and gives a grounding to the interviews, it is not an equal or true conversation such as those between family, friends or co-workers (Ryan et al., 2009). Therefore, the transcriptions of the completed interviews included insights from my journaling, designated by a different colored font as well as any impressions or anomalies that I discovered while transcribing, in a third colored font. After the transcription process was complete it was my role to interpret and find similarities and differences between the different interviews. In this process thus far, I gathered data using three methods: the journaling, the list of target points which will be used to categorize key words and phrases in the interviews, and the

transcription of the interviews. For clarity, prior to the interviews I developed a list of key words (target points), phrases and trends that I anticipated the respondents would utilize in their answers. As I read the transcriptions, I highlighted those particular words and or phrases as well as developed a new list of trends that might emerge from each reading. I also documented discovered words, phrases and trends that developed from reading and analyzing the data. As previously mentioned, when the interviews relayed similar responses, I made the conclusion that my data was saturated and that further participants were not necessary.

It was essential to keep three things in mind while discovering the data from the interviews and interactions: data reduction, data display and data verification (Miles et al., 2014). While I analyzed the data from the transcriptions, I found sources of information that required reduction of the information which was simplified to look at all of it as a whole and allow the data to have a focus. Any outlying or unexpected information I recorded to look at for future research or to include in the conclusion if needed.

I read the transcriptions a total of three times per interview to confer that I understood what the participant was trying to relay. During each reading, I highlighted key points, phrases, and words to add to my query. The three readings did not occur simultaneously to avoid redundancy and tedium that might taint the findings. I journaled my thoughts and suppositions during the reading process relayed here and aligned them with the journaling that I did previously prior to the interview. These

entries provided a balance of interpretation and continued levels of credibility needed as I am the sole researcher on this project.

Role as Transcription Decoder

After employing reason to the transcriptions and determining pathways of familiarity and similarity and finding key words and phrases the challenge was to decode the information. I developed a thematic approach to the details that emerged from the transcribed interviews and from those themes I developed answers to my research questions. Here lay the opportunity to display the data in a chart or graph for a visual interpretation of the results I have found. I utilized a focus wall and mind-mapped the information using the research questions as headings and strips of paper for the themes, key words, and phrases. Using this unique visual display, allowed me to see the data that emerged from the interviews. I verified the conclusions and explanations of the rural volunteer phenomenon.

Professional/Personal Relationships

Of importance is my recently resigned role as the Program Manager for a non-profit volunteer organization in my rural area. This position provided me with continued credibility in a field wherein I recruited and retained volunteers to advocate for abused and neglected children in a rural area and thus have some understanding of the style of questioning and the relationship or reputation within the volunteer community that drew participants to this research as well as provided a foundation for the interview. I followed a specific format in the interview process for developing rapport as well as consistency in the interviews. I began with collecting demographic

information verbally. Learning information about the background of the participants created a beginning dialog. I began the interview session with non-threating questions, those that build rapport such as where they currently volunteer, the length of time they have volunteered and put them at ease as well as began the development of a relationship between the two of us. I moved then to more research essential questions and then I completed the interviews with personal questions relating to their quality of life in volunteering. This format is in reference to Trochim (2005).

Researcher Bias

In a qualitative study it can be inferred that it is difficult to be completely non-biased in the work (Creswell, 2013). I practiced due diligence to check my bias often and noted interpretations by utilizing journaling before, during and after the interview process. I also completed a brief pilot utilizing the interview questions (Trochim, 2005) I developed and the questions I originally wrote for the study (see Appendix B). The pilot included three people all of whom volunteer within the two largest communities in the designated research area. I conducted interviews with them replicating the format I originally proposed (pre-pandemic), within the allotted one-hour time frame, in the same type of public location. Using the three transcriptions I analyzed the interviews in the same manner designated for study participants. The three interviews prompted several question rewrites, and those changes were presented in the proposal for the IRB to review. When the IRB accepted the study, a quick interview was piloted, and no changes were warranted and therefore I began the research project. The pilot interviews

are not included in the research data or final conclusions as they were for my benefit, only.

Reflecting on preconceived notions as well as first impressions and interpretations of the interview provided retrospective thought into the process and an outlet for checking bias. I was wary of whom I interviewed and my relationships with them documenting this in journaling. I ensured that I was forthcoming with the participants as to my intentions as well as those they may help to recruit for this study. The participant consent form also reiterated this information and every participant responded by I consent.

The information that I gathered was/is not sensitive in nature; and the participants did not share personal information or stories that they did not want recorded; therefore, I did not stop the recordings or designate time of discontinuation or continuation after the conversation. When answers or points in the conversation included defining details that might cause recognition of the participant, I made the individual aware of the possibility of recognition and provided them with an opportunity to omit that answer or subject. Due to their knowledge of having a random name assigned to them to provide anonymity there was not any opposition to question or answer given. Included in the participant consent form was the disclosure that as a mandated reporter, should they disclose any form of abuse or neglect or harm to themselves or others I was required to report it. Any item that needed clarity and/or documentation was written into the participant consent release and participation form and explained to the participant prior to their emailing their consent authorization.

Participant Selection Logic

Participants in this study were recruited from within the Pacific Northwest rural areas. Multiple strategies were originally going to be used to recruit participants however the original email request snowballed, and I was able to gather 18 participants. Out of the 18 participants, 15 decided to complete the interview process and after transcribing the interviews I reached data saturation and therefore determined I had enough participants. The following identify the population, describe the recruitment strategy, saturation of the results, transferability of results to other populations and how the participant interviews are identified.

Population

The recruitment of volunteers for this study took place throughout the designated area. At a glance, previous research, documented in Chapter 2, shows that the demographic information of an average volunteer is: a white female, educated, a parent; the majority of whom are retired from career-oriented jobs (Bronstein & Mason, 2013; Dutt & Grabe, 2014; Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007; Hustinx et al., 2010; Hyde et al., 2018; Manning, 2010; Ramdianee, 2014; Wilson, 2000). This was indicative in my participant pool as well.

I recruited and interviewed until the evidence began to show repetitive answers, a reasonable level of saturation, or recommended guidelines, (Malterud et al., 2010; Marshall, 1996; Mason, 2010) wherein the answers and the key points of the interview transcriptions began to read the same. Once the answers overlapped the evidentiary results were outlined for the result analysis and conclusion data points.

The guideline or saturation point for this study was driven by the answers to the interview questions. I wanted to assure that all the questions had detailed answers and all avenues from those answers were explored. The summary and conclusions of the data I collected and analyzed will provide reasoning as to how and why I chose the saturation point I did. Of course, there was the possibility that the study would recruit limited participants, and therefore I would be forced to conclude the interviews and notate this in my research.

Sampling Strategy

The proposed sampling strategy recruitment for this study was two-fold. The first strategy would be a judgement sampling (Marshall, 1996), wherein recruitment was active in and among the frequented areas the participants might shop, eat, have coffee with the placement of posters and flyers. Also, I proposed that I would present brief advertisements and ads in local literature such as the local newspapers, church bulletins, and volunteer organizations' websites and newsletters. The concept of a judgement sampling, according to Marshall (1996), holds a more intellectual construct than other sampling strategies. He proposed that this sampling technique allowed for the researcher to recruit a more purposeful sample. The second strategy, a snowball effect (Creswell & Clark, 2017), wherein those interested in participating might recruit others within their organizations or friends which provided more available and willing participants. This project's objectives warranted a variety of participants who may have had contrasting answers to questions and outlooks on volunteering as this will provide a more in-depth and data rich study. Searching for participants beyond the

largest communities benefited the study as it brought influence and reflection from every corner of the area, again providing an exhaustive, data rich study. Setting a personal goal of 15 participants seemed reasonable however, the completed study relied on saturation due to participant response.

Participant Criteria

Any individual that had volunteered for a year or more and was actively volunteering for an organization in the defined rural area was eligible for this project. The only restrictions were age, language, and those that were only volunteering due to community service or service-learning requirements. Those under 18 years old are considered a vulnerable population and therefore too many precautions would have had to be made to include them in this interview project; not discounting, however, that many individuals under 18 years old volunteer in the community. The second restriction was language, I only speak English and therefore all participants needed to speak English to participate in the interview process. The third restriction revolved around the two local colleges which both require their students to participate in community services and humanitarian efforts for college graduation. This requirement defeated the purpose of a true volunteer or one who was not receiving any tangible reciprocity and therefore disqualified this population. Participants for this study did not have regulatory criteria except that they needed to be volunteering currently in the designated rural research area, had not been paid for their work, and were willing to be interviewed telephonically and spend the time to complete the interview. I provided the potential participant with an

understanding of the project with the first official point of contact (email) and asked the following questions:

1. To what capacity are you volunteering at present?
2. Are you 18 years of age or older?
3. Are you able to talk with me on the phone approximately one hour and answer approximately eighteen questions about your volunteer experiences?
4. If you are willing to be a participant for this study, please reply "I consent" to this email.

If the individual was willing to participate, measured by the answers to the above questions, an interview was set up and agreed upon.

For this study to have had validity as well as credibility, the recruitment and interview process needed to have a large enough sample to reflect the volunteer base in the designated rural area. Interviews needed to take place until the predetermined point of saturation had occurred. The point of saturation, again, is when there is enough duplicated data gathered for the original study to find themes as well as allow the ability for other researchers to replicate the research. In processing, the data saturation was apparent in that there was not any more sufficient data to further code; the coding started to be redundant and/or repeated (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The logic behind a search and acceptance of all volunteers was to gain a large enough sample and demographic variety for the interviews and for a reflection of the area volunteers.

This study was homogeneous as it reflected on a group with commonalities that were apparent during the interview. The snowball/chain of gathering information was

effective due to my ability to reach out to the rural communities and request participants and those that replied encouraged others via email, to also join the project, thus executing a successful snowball effect.

During the interview process sampling became opportunistic as it provided me the ability to ask follow-up questions during the interview if necessary as well as the ability to contact participants if I had further questions during the transcription process. Subsequently, I did contact the participants via email to ask a follow-up question. I received 12 out of 15 responses to the follow-up question. Each participant was aware of the premise behind the research, the outcome positivity of the research and that the intended invitation to participate was to gather a meaningful sampling of individuals who had participated in some way, not including donations, as a volunteer (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Consideration of the ideal number of participants of this study relied on the recommendations of Creswell (2013) who provided the purposeful range of three to 25 participants as appropriate and prudent for this type of research. Through my recruitment efforts I believe reaching the saturation point will be amenable to this study and my goal for participant numbers was between 15 and 20.

Background for Interview Recruitment

To allow multiple interviews in a day; the minimum time limit I set for an interview was between one and two hours and I scheduled the interviews at the convenience of the participant. Due to the multiple participants, I interviewed one to two per day and I also reserved the appropriate amount of time for a reflection journal, key word notation, and introductory small talk, and timely transcription. The

questions examined topics that explored the motivations behind the individual's choice to volunteer, what motivated them to continue volunteering, what kept them in the volunteer positions they currently held. In addition, the questions had the participant reflect on volunteer positions they left. The interviews were conducted via phone call instead of in person due to the COVID-19 virus restrictions. Due to the differing abilities for using platforms like ZOOM or FaceTime, including my lack of knowledge, as well as the newness of the call to isolate, I choose not to utilize those platforms to make sure there was consistency in the interview process. The goal of each question in the interview was to challenge the participant to reflect on their work as a volunteer. The eighteen questions were manageable, and each interview was between 35 and 60 minutes which provided enough time for reflection. In transcribing the interviews, I exposed key words and phrases as meaningful common threads in each interview.

Interview Protocol

Prior to the interview, via email, the research project was explained, and the consent form was attached with the request to read it and respond, "I Consent" to signify that they understood and wanted to participate. The time frame of one hour for the interview was proposed to keep the scope of the interview focused on the goal, as well as, synchronous with the other interview sessions. The interviews for this project were scheduled (time/date) in advance to guarantee the maximum number of interviews possible and allotting time for the participants to share rich descriptions of their volunteer experience. This semi-structured style of interviewing allowed for a give and take relationship between the participants and myself which created an

opportunity to develop meaning from the answers as well provide time to gather additional information from the open-ended questions than an unstructured interview would not have provided.

Instrumentation

As previously mentioned, this project was based on in-person interviews that I conducted with volunteers throughout the defined rural area. There were 18 questions that focus on the participant's experiences, and journey to becoming a volunteer, as well as their opinions on addressing potential volunteers and volunteer coordinators. I wrote the questions myself using the research I have previously done as well as the experience I have in interviewing volunteers. I also conducted a pilot study using both an original list of questions, and subsequently, after editing, the finalized 18 questions. These pilots tested the credibility and structure of using the questions to create meaningful dialog and are not included in the final data. I recorded each of the participant interviews using a recording device and created transcriptions of the interviews. The journal entries I recorded provided secondary data for research analysis and result emphasis.

The participants were provided a consent form via email and I requested a response email of "I consent" if they wanted to participate. The email also explicitly informed the participants about how the recordings and all personal/informational data would be maintained confidentiality. Also discussed was the anonymity of each participant and noting that their first name only would be used for my reference to the interview and an alias would be assigned for publication purposes. Should the

participant disagree with this usage of their personal name, an alternative will be given to their interview information for the research portion while maintaining their contact information should follow-up be necessary. The participants understood that they could put an end to the interview as well as retract their participation in the project at any time.

During the interview I summarized the participants remarks to assure that I understood their comments correctly. After the interview, I sent out thank you cards to each of the interviewees in appreciation for participation. Consequently, clarification was needed post-interview and as this was written into the consent form, I contacted the participants via email for that clarification.

I transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim within twenty-four hours after the completion of the interview. After the transcriptions were complete, I read each individual interview transcription three times. The second reading was to determine any underlying themes and the third to identify commonalities or threads of similarities between the interviews. The third reading was completed after all the interviews and interview transcriptions were completed and I read them in the same sitting. Interviews that provided any anomalies within the three data components were not disregarded but discussed as outlier themes.

All data is stored according to the recommendations of the American Psychological Association (APA) which is seven years post-interview (Vanden Bos, 2010). The data will be kept in a locked box and the contents will include original

interview transcriptions and any other information key to the research in relation to the participants. My journal entries will also be stored with this data.

The interview instrument tool is a standardized open-ended in-person interview tool of which the question-and-answer phase was recorded and transcribed. The questions and protocol were designed by myself and are modeled from the successful recruitment, interview, and retainment processes I used previously as the program manager of a volunteer program. During the 3-step review of the transcriptions I utilized coding techniques to determine categories and themes (Saldan, 2013).

For quality assurance purposes, limitations and cohesive or homogenous measures were put in place such as time-limits, locations, synchronous interview recording, consistent transcription and the ability to establish dependability and credibility through these consistent measures (Trochim, 2006). Personal relationship and trust building during the interview will also aided in this capacity.

Each participant answered each question in the same order as every other participant. I only improvised if the participant opted out after a few questions or as the questions I asked solicited full engagement from the participant and s/he relayed information in further detail or provided new information that was originally expected. During the interview, I utilized my ability to determine themes quickly as well as mitigated any bias I may had (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015) which assisted in establishing boundaries and complete productivity and therefore deemed the interviews appropriate.

Data Analysis Plan

Due to the change in interview technique, in-person to telephonic, I was able to transcribe the interviews verbatim as I listened to the responses. I listened to each recorded interview a second time for assurance. I color-coded inferences and themes as well as inputted one color for my journal notations. I notated who was speaking, myself or the participant, and itemized each within the context of the transcription. The interview questions were the precursor for these notations and each interview was notated the same way to avoid deviance from the main goal.

I developed a process of coding which was utilized verbatim, and each interview was transcribed within 24 hours to encapsulate the link between the interview and my memory for validity and consistency prior to reading the transcription as well as after. I was the only transcriber and the only coder. Results saturation occurred once there were answers that were consistent in theme. I determined saturation by comparing each interview transcript and determining if answers were becoming repetitive. When the majority of answers were conclusively similar, I finished my recruitment process. Only the personal experiences, logically, were not similar. I asked each participant if they would like the results of the study after my Dissertation had been approved, and I made a notation if the response was yes.

Issues of Trustworthiness

It is implied in research that the person or persons that have proposed and followed through to publish research are trustworthy. In 2019 scientists and the lay public were made aware that there are instances of forgery, misleading data, and falsified

research. One such instance wherein the masses followed and relied on the trust of the researcher was the falsification of data in 1998 that claimed that immunizations cause autism (Rao & Andrade, 2011). This example has caused public outcry as well as a preconceived notion of distrust of research and statistical analysis. Issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures have been called to task and researchers are vigilant in providing them throughout their research. One way to ensure this trust is to keep scrupulous records and audit oneself frequently. The following sections will address details of how this study followed clean and reliable pathways to insure trustworthiness between this research and the reader.

Credibility

Establishing credibility for the premise, procedures, and results of the study creates a trust between this researcher, potential researchers, and organizations that might want to use this work to recruit and retain a volunteer workforce. Internal consistency in having records that are organized and well thought out, clarifying all terms during the analysis phase of research, being consistent and following all ethical standards as well as concluding the research with evidence-based discussions and conclusions are all pieces of developing credibility in the work (John Marsden, 13:28:06 UTC; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stadtlander, 2018). Maintaining transparency through all stages of the research and communication with the participants that is open and accepting, as well as continuing the research until I reached a point of saturation reflected concretely on results provides credibility.

As a new researcher, continual check-in schedules and communication with my dissertation Chair, Dr. Lee Stadtlander, and committee has positioned myself as a credible and knowledgeable person worthy of conducting this research. I had flexibility while conducting the interviews as well as maintaining an openness for constructive criticism from those who participate, read the research, and sit on my committee. I also was considerate of other research and updated my literature review as often as possible prior to publishing. My research was also be vetted through the internal review board process at Walden University with the approval number: 05-14-20-0176066.

Further, I continually checked my personal bias and desire to reach specific data by keeping meticulous and consistent notes and journaling (Noble & Smith, 2015). These checks and balances included here as well as referenced in my data collection and conclusion provide the credibility for other researchers and readers.

Transferability

Establishing a novel piece of research with the goal of producing a connection with volunteer organizations as well as future researchers created the opportunity or responsibility of creating a product that can be painlessly generalized and transferred to other researchers who can do similar research or use the information within their own context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To do so, the formatting and explanations had to be contextual and maintain consistency and credibility in the methodology and reporting.

Utilizing clear and concise information as well as description-rich wording when developing procedures and reporting processes on all accounts assures that other researchers will have the ability to generalize this work. In addition, other researchers will

be able to transfer it successfully to meet their needs and create this research again. Transferring this research which includes my own data delineates a conversation of sorts wherein many parties can discover conduits for best practices in recruiting and retaining volunteers in rural areas. This project is a professionally descriptive project wherein all matters pertaining to the research was defined and described to the best of ability and in detail. All applicable details were defined for replication and furthering this research.

Dependability

Research and researchers must provide the audience a reason to be dependent on the work that is presented to them. Determining how to be precise, explicit, and transferable is an impression that the researcher tries to relay through the study and the writing of the study, research, and conclusion. Dependability needs to maintain throughout time, research, and the analysis techniques. There are several techniques that make this possible, one of which is creating an audit trail of the work (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) which I did via a research journal.

Dependability also relies on the consistency and accuracy of asking the same questions of each participant, utilizing the same channels of interpreting the answers and creating a transparency wherein outside inquiries into the data and the results that I gathered can be discussed and assessed by others (Hycner, 1985; Koch, 2006; Stadtlander, 2018). To create this dependability for this research project I relied on my dissertation committee to provide constructive criticism as a key to its success. I relied on the processes of review and revision provided by both my Walden University committee and Internal Review Board as I designed, executed, and analyzed the data I collected.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the validity of research. To ensure that the research is neutral and objective it is essential to report and search for negated data while being aware of what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call reflexive analysis or an awareness of personal influences on the data.

Delineating a trail of how I designed the questions for the interview and as well as how I processed the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the completed data for this study provide confirmability or validity of the findings. Specifically, I participated in a step-by-step relay to determine how the research was to be collected, how the research was analyzed, and what specificity I would use for analysis.

A second degree that I used to master confirmability was journaling the research process. I kept the journal during the process of writing this dissertation and subsequently completing the research project. The journal was insightful due to the details I added that relayed why I made the decisions I made while the dissertation focuses on the how. These efforts will provide the reader and future researcher an understanding that the results were not compiled due to the bias of the researcher but rather due to the background of the research (supported by the literature review), the detail of the interview process and careful transcription and detailed interpretation of the results and therefore providing a substantiated conclusion.

Ethical Procedures

To maintain the upmost ethical standards in this research every protocol suggested and discussed was followed (Stadtlander, 2018; Vanden Bos, 2010). The interviews took

place telephonically to maintain social distancing required during the pandemic. The participant restrictions eliminated those under 18, those who did not speak understandable English and those who were not volunteering in the rural research area. Each interview session was scheduled for the same amount of time (1 hour) using the same questions with the option of a half hour follow up. Recruitment was public and disbursed via email equally across the defined research study area.

The materials for this study that are participant related will be destroyed within the APA recommended seven years and this was addressed with each participant as was their ability to discontinue their participation at any point during the interview/study (Vanden Bos, 2010). This topic is not crucially personal, however, I made it clear with each participant that if they disclosed any information that I believe was hazardous to their safety or the safety of others I would report it to the appropriate authority. Additionally, I gave the participant the preemptive option that if they disclosed any information that they deemed too personal, and they request anonymity I would make the decision to designate this information as not publishable. All the information was disclosed in the consent form. The IRB approval number and date was indicated in all materials used for recruitment and provided to the participants (Vanden Bos, 2010).

Summary

Chapter 3 has provided insight into this research and the details as to how the study commenced. The purpose of this study was to define the rural volunteers' motivations and how the act of volunteering affects their well-being. Additionally, the motives for this research were delineated, rationalized, and the procedures for recruiting

and interviewing participants were outlined. Efforts were made, in this chapter to provide definitions of the roles the researcher played, as well as the issues of trust, and ethical procedures. The ability for another researcher to transfer this methodology to their own population of study was addressed in this chapter. The chapter to follow, Chapter 4, will provide the research process and data collection described in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This qualitative study was conceived to gain a better understanding of the following research questions:

RQ1: What motivates individuals in the rural Pacific Northwest to volunteer?

RQ2: How do rural volunteers describe their experiences as volunteers?

The drive to developing this study was to establish guidelines to increase the volunteer workforce in rural communities as social service funding has been diminishing and communities are leaning on non-profit agencies to provide care (Davies et al., 2018; Debbie Haski-Leventhal et al., 2019). An open-ended interview process for gaining information was used to address a target population of those over 18 who had been volunteering for over a year, could speak and write English, and lived in the rural area in question. The study was approved by the Walden University IRB (#05-14-20-0176066). This chapter includes a summary and the results of the project including: a review of the pilot study, the setting of the interviews, demographic information about the participants, data collection and analysis strategies, evidential information on trustworthiness of the study, and a summary of the results and their significance. This study was impacted by both the 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as well as the extreme racial tension that increased during that spring inspired by the police murder of George Floyd, and this will be discussed in this chapter as well.

Pilot Study Review

The pilot study consisted of three people. All three are longtime community members and have volunteered in the area. I interviewed each person and had them critique the interview questions after completion. After the third interview, the questions were rewritten to incorporate 18 appropriate questions. The constructive criticism I received during the interviews was helpful in that I learned to slow down and delve deeper into answers. Additionally, some of my questions were too vague and off topic. All three interviews were done in person in a private area of a coffee shop or home. The results of this pilot study are not included in the final data and were conducted prior to the pandemic.

Setting

As mentioned, my pilot study interviews were done in person. Chapter 3 included processes of recruiting and meeting with participants in person. This interview technique would, in my opinion, have led to more in-depth answers to the questions as well as spontaneous follow-up questions and perhaps more in-depth descriptions of volunteer experiences. Unfortunately, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic of 2020 made in-person interviews impossible due to state and local shutdowns, the requirements of isolation, and the lengthy continuance of both. When it was confirmed that these circumstances would be long term, I changed the interview style to telephonic interviews. This change was made prior to IRB approval so an addendum submission was not necessary, and the IRB published a statement accepting these changes. After I recruited

participants, I interviewed them telephonically. I was in my home office, so the interviews were private. I recorded the interviews in writing and via a recording device.

Demographics

Table 1 includes the demographic information that was recorded. Most participants were white, older, retired women. The youngest participant was 20 years old, and the only male participant was 53 years old. Table 1 includes pseudonym, age, gender, preferred pronouns, ethnicity/race, marital status, and work status. Religious or spiritual backgrounds were not included for this study but were indicated in the responses to some of the questions. Another demographic that I did not include was presence and existence of children. This too was indicated in some of the participants' responses.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Gender Identity	Preferred Pronouns	Ethnicity/Race	Marital Status	Work Status
Lorraine	68	Female	She/Her	White	Married	Retired
Eddie	53	Male	He/Him	White	Married	Retired
Theresa	80	Female	She/Her	White	Married	Retired
Rose	73	Female	She/Her	White	Married	Retired/*OB
Shelley	72	Female	She/Her	White	Married	Retired
Penelope	77	Female	She/Her	White	Married	Homemaker
Marilyn	51	Female	She/Her	White	Married	Retired
Constance	71	Female	She/Her	White	Divorced	Retired
Gwen	60	Female	She/Her	Native American	Married	Retired
Wanda	77	Female	She/Her	White	Divorced	Retired
Holly	77	Female	She/Her	White	Divorced	Retired
Joyce	84	Female	She/Her	White	Widow	Retired
Bonnie	79	Female	She/Her	White	Married	Retired
Audrey	77	Female	She/Her	White	Married	Retired
Olivia	20	Female	She/Her	White	Single	Student

Note. *OB refers to participant owning her own business after retirement.

Data Collection

As mentioned, Coronavirus (COVID-19) caused significant changes to my interview process. I considered interviewing participants via the Internet or phone platforms such as ZOOM, Skype, or Facetime; however, these platforms were just becoming popular due to work-at-home isolation restrictions and most school districts converting to online venues and therefore, unfamiliar to me as well the participants.

Participant recruitment was intended to be public and include advertising; however, my first email request for participants had a snowball effect, and it was passed throughout the rural area to many volunteers and consequently, several participants were identified. In all, to reach saturation, I interviewed 15 participants. No personal conditions influenced recruitment or the interviews, and the participants responded to each question clearly and appropriately.

I conducted each interview telephonically from the privacy of my home office. To comply ethically with IRB standards, I emailed participation consent forms to each potential participant and asked them to read it and reply “I consent” to assure they understood the research process and their participation in it. Each participant was aware that the telephone interviews would be at maximum one hour and they also understood that I was interviewing them privately. Each interview was scheduled, and if more than one interview took place in a day, they were about 4 hours apart. The longest interview was approximately 45 minutes.

Each interview was recorded for transcription; the nature of the questions and brief responses to them allowed me to write each response clearly on printed copies of

the interviews, and I used these response forms for the transcriptions. I then listened to the interviews a second time, using my recording device and addressed remaining exchanges. Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the interviews needed to be altered from in-person to telephonic interviews; thus, the interviews were briefer than I expected. However, the majority of answers were detailed and provided in depth answers to the questions I asked. I listened to each interview a total of three times; during the first time, I wrote down key points. I then looked at and transcribed responses, and interviews were then completed along with coding. I did this to ensure I did not miss anything important. I determined that I had recruited enough participants due to the duplicate answers. Thus, I felt saturation of data had been fulfilled. Original coded data did not involve the issue I was addressing rural volunteering. This was brought to my attention by my URR committee member after his first review. In the consent form and during the interviews the participants were made aware that I would possibly contact them again for clarification. I reminded them of the study and asked them how they thought rural volunteering differed from volunteering in a city. I received 12 responses from the pool of 15 original participants.

Sample Selection

A recruitment email was sent out and it snowballed, creating the opportunity to quickly begin scheduling the interviews. Within two weeks I had interviewed 15 participants and the interview process revealed saturation for each of the 18 interview questions. Semi-structured telephonic interviews were conducted for 35 to 45 minutes. Interviews took place without interruption and were conducted and recorded as planned,

however, telephonically, not in person as mentioned previously. I do not think this method of interviewing was as effective as in-person interviews would have been, however, the information garnered enabled me to reach saturation.

The participants included 13 retirees, one homemaker and one student. Each participant was over 18, spoke and read English, had at least one year of volunteering and was currently volunteering at some capacity. Due to the pandemic several of their organizations had either closed or suspended volunteer programs and some of the participants had taken the opportunity to continue volunteer by making masks or buying groceries for neighbors instead.

Chapter 3 defined the data collection process as one-on-one interviews in participants communities either in a public library or a coffee shop where there was privacy for the interview. As previously mentioned, this was not possible, so the alternative of telephonic interviewing was used. It was difficult to create follow-up or alternative questions during the interview to create more in-depth answers due to not being able to read facial or body language or build the one-on-one relationship with the respondents. In addition, the participants, displayed an underlying urgency to discontinue the phone conversation by appearing rushed in answering, and not being willing, at times to expand on their answer. The questions I developed did provide enough targeted answers that I did get the data needed for my study, however, more of the rural piece was needed and I developed and emailed a follow-up question in that regard.

Data Analysis

Transcription of the data occurred in two ways. The first was during the interviews wherein I wrote poignant words and phrases down while the participants answered the questions on pre-printed blank interview sheets and second, I listened to each recorded interview and completed the transcription. I accomplished the latter at least twenty-four hours after the interview was completed. My third listen was at the completion of the interviews and original transcriptions. I tried to garner whether I was missing information or innuendos in the answers to the questions.

The second step to analyzing the participants responses to the interview questions was to reduce the amount of information into codes or themes. Coding the interviews became the second phase in the data analysis process. Each transcription was coded manually using colored pens. The coding process or open coding included determining major themes and their corresponding representative answers clarifying those themes. This process revealed 37 themes and when selectively coded these themes could be categorized into 15 areas. There were not any outliers in the answers, each question had at least 2-3 similar answers. While particular focus was on the research questions an openness and checks and balances of bias was on the forefront allowing for new information to be revealed. Each answer was summarized into partial and singular words and placed on a strip of paper. The ink for each answer was color coded to the theme of the answer. These strips were then placed under the titles which were the research questions. I am a visual person and used a wall to mind map the data in this way making

it possible for me to see the gravity of information that I had collected from the 15 telephonic interviews.

The follow-up question in regard to rural volunteering was not coded in this way. The follow-up data was an addition to question two, “How would you define volunteer?”. The answers were in perspective and enlightening and a solid addition, in my opinion, to the research.

RQ1 What Motivates Individuals in the Pacific Northwest to Volunteer?

The interview questions which prompted resulting data for this research question were:

Q1. What Originally Brought You to the Decision to Become a Volunteer?

Common answers revolved around retiring and wanting to do something that was meaningful, or to help to do something for the community. Other answers revolved around continuing a lifetime of volunteering due to religious affiliations or having children and being asked to volunteer [school-related] and continuing that opportunity to be connected to others.

Eighteen total answers included the idea of helping others as the biggest motivation for volunteering. Two participants mentioned helping children and animals and six participant answers included helping community, families, and children as a precursor to becoming motivated to volunteer. Lorraine (aged 68) replied that part of her decision to volunteer included how meaningful it is to be helping people. Wanda (aged 77) made it very clear that seeing the progress of the children she worked with was all the motivation she needed to keep volunteering. Further, Joyce (aged 84) talked about her

love of reading. She described her journey to volunteering to help children read as beginning with her own children and as something she really enjoyed. After she began talking with others about their volunteer experience she heard about this opportunity and knew reading to kids would be fun and she has been doing it for many years as one of her volunteer responsibilities.

Sixteen answers in all specifically mentioned *helping* as a keyword to describing volunteering specifically as to whether the joy of helping or the feeling good nature of helping were the draws to doing so. Eddie (aged 53) described his motivation behind volunteering as being able to "see a tangible effect on the population that [he] is helping."

The second overall theme was developing knowledge, skills, and abilities either in utilizing that which the participant already had or learning new elements. Lorraine, for example became a hospital patient support volunteer after retiring from teaching. She did so because she wanted to "commit to something outside of [herself] and learn something new while doing so." Olivia (aged 20) mentioned that she was seeking to become a volunteer "to gain work experience and help out animals in [her] community." She also mentioned networking and finding a passion for a job that she might attend college for. Seven answers in total mentioned these capabilities as motivators.

Meeting others or being a part of a group drew the next significant number at 6 answers targeting these topics. 51-year-old Marilyn was very adamant about becoming a volunteer in her community when she moved there seven years ago. She explained that she was not a church attendee and she did not want to feel lonely so she searched out

organizations that might need help and this helped her meet people and become part of the community as a whole.

Compiling both the need to be active after retirement and the fun and engagement of being involved with volunteering to add to retirement lifestyles was the last category for motivational attributes of these volunteers that participated in the study of the 15 participants 14 were retired.

Q7. Could You Share an Aspect of Your Volunteer Experiences that You Have Really Enjoyed?

The list was extensive but synonymous for most of the participants. They enjoyed learning, being with people, having fun with people, watching those they are helping grow and change, and the mutual benefit or as Holly (aged 77) replied, “It’s a gift to them but I get so much out of it.” To note is the answer Gwen (aged 60) provided, “It is good to get out of my white privilege bubble and see that we are all the same.” Provided the racial tensions in the world at this time (2020) I thought this a very poignant answer.

Q11. How Would You Advise Someone if They Were Trying to Decide to Volunteer?

The answers ranged from advising them to just go for it, to finding a passion and then going for it. The participants agreed that interest and making sure the mission matches the interest is important as is knowing what time one must give to an organization and whether they have the time to spare. Rose (aged 73) said, “The most important thing [about deciding to volunteer] would be something that [you’re] really passionate about. Something that [you] care so much about that it doesn’t matter how [you] are giving up [your] time.” Penelope (aged 77) mentioned that wanting to volunteer

is one thing but replied, “Go where your heart is... volunteer for something that you care about. It would make a world of difference. And if it is something that you care about… you will put your heart into it and it won’t become a drudgery.” Another comment, provided by Constance (aged 71), emphasized the organization’s mission as being an important consideration, she said, “It is important to understand the benefit of the organization and to know the value of the work or mission.”

Q14. You’ve Volunteered for [] Years. What Motivates You to Keep Volunteering?

The answers were in the same genre in that the volunteer work is satisfying to the participants especially when they see improvement or progress in the mission, they are working for in addition to feeling their work has value. Theresa (aged 80) said, “When [you] see progress in what [you] are doing.” “I have a wonderful feeling that I’m doing something valuable.” Rose. “The feeling of helping and feeling that it’s worth my time.” Bonnie (aged 79). They either answered that the satisfaction came from the people they worked with or the people they worked to help. “It is important to, to be out there and be part of the community,” Marilyn. “Sometimes inertia? It’s like, okay its Tuesday, where do I go on Tuesday? And enjoying the people that you’re working with…” Penelope. Several participants liked that they had a schedule after retirement that keeps them going. Marilyn explained, “…being retired and not having anything else and maybe a work ethic. I can’t just sit around.” Eddie answered, “It is just in my nature. It is part of my DNA!”

Q16. Describe a Particular Experience that Motivates and Energizes You to Continue as a Volunteer.

The answers to this question were very personal and related to those the participant had helped or the organization that they volunteered for. The following are a few instances in which the volunteers specifically related to the population the volunteer was involved with helping. Lorraine, for example, noted that her favorite moments in her volunteer position "I'm pleased when I'm able to handle a difficult customer. … just the ability to calm those people down. …helps the people who work for the hospital that they don't have to deal with that… …that makes me feel good." Audrey (aged 77) emphasized that she liked "Seeing the light in children's eyes when they learn something or recognize you. Seeing/hearing from an elderly, lonely person after you've visited them." "… we were [fulfilling all their needs] and I could imagine that on Christmas Day" inserted Theresa. Rose had many positive and energizing residuals from her volunteer efforts, and she said specifically,

> Being greeted with excitement when I walk through the door. People [within the organization] are excited to have volunteers there and trust that they are there to do work. Being rewarded by the animals with their reactions and being tired when I get home all of these keep me volunteering.

RQ2 How Do Rural Volunteers Describe their Experience as a Volunteer?

Three significant themes highlighted this research question: mutual benefits, the passion/compassion of the work, and the benefit of having a schedule after retirement. Words that were common between the participants included commitment, helping others, compassion, or passion, increasing quality of life for others, increased quality of life for the participant, and the description of volunteering as unpaid meaningful labor. When

Gwen, talked about volunteering she mentioned, “the only remittance is wisdom and compassion and that goes both ways.” Later when discussing what motivated her to keep volunteering, she added, “[it] improves my quality of life and the quality of life of my community.” Wanda felt her volunteer experiences give her “reason and a purpose.” Holly laughed and replied, “I’d be bored out of my skull if I didn’t!” One of the most poignant proclamations was Audrey said, “I have time [and it] seems to be more worthwhile to give to others than to myself.”

An additional benefit to the questions I asked during the interview was finding out rural volunteer opinion on recruiting and retaining volunteers. Five trending themes developed from the answers the participants provided. The strongest theme at 18 answers was the volunteer organization’s response to potential volunteers as well as working volunteers. Specifically, whether there was a response at all. Olivia said, “it was difficult to find an organization that would take me seriously.” She had volunteered periodically with her Nana prior to turning 18 and thought that at 18 she would strike out on her own and volunteer. The organizations she signed up to help would not call her for opportunities. She mentioned that several of the organizations would continuously advertise they needed volunteers, but they never responded to her emails or calls, “they are missing out on a huge demographic because they aren’t reaching out to the young in ways they understand. The organizations need to be appreciative of those who sign up and transparent with what the benefits are and then contact them if they show interest.” She reiterated that she had, several times, signed up personally at the animal shelter and received no response. In contrast, Bonnie’s experience was different. She volunteered

with the schools in reading programs before the Coronavirus (COVID-19) shut down. She mentioned that the organizer of the program provided many opportunities for volunteering with children and that got her excited and wanting to give of her time as she felt it was "worth [her] time." Lorraine, "it is meaningful, you are helping people. This needs to be of personal interest of the director and thus, telling [them] about the tasks will help them know what [they] will be doing. To convey the importance of the job [to a potential volunteer]."

Training and initial assignment of tasks came next with 7 answers and the appreciation of volunteers followed closely with 6 mentions. Audrey felt that a way to appreciate volunteers is time. "Letting [them] know how much they are appreciated, constantly. Even a simple thank you. Taking time to train them, specifically." "Make [them] feel good about themselves." Joyce said. Holly "being genuine and the sincerity of purpose has to be clear." And Gwen felt that organizations that provide job descriptions and assign specific tasks not only draw the volunteers that have the skills to work in the organization, but the assignments that they will do and putting put them to work quickly so they see the mutual benefits to what they are doing.

To recruit volunteers' word of mouth as well as utilizing the media were the suggestions from the participants. Gwen suggested, strongly that [organizations themselves need to be] "very clear about what [the organization] needs to have done, who to report to. Maybe having job descriptions that can be handed out or used during recruitment" as well as being concise about their mission of purpose as well as being organized for the volunteer perspective.

The discrepant or outlier answers to questions were especially apparent from the two youngest participants, Olivia and Marilyn. Both felt there was resistance to their offer to volunteer and both felt it was due to their age. As previously mentioned, Olivia started searching for an organization she thought would be a good match when she was 18. She was taking a gap year from college and wanted to enhance her skills both with her job and with volunteering before she applied them in school. Marilyn, who was new to the community at age 44, found it hard to break into different organizations because she felt there was a group of volunteers that volunteered for everything and those women were relied on. She thought the organizations did not want to take a chance on someone else. Parallel to this is that those who were over the age of 70 in the study felt that age, older age, was a precursor for not being invited or accepted as a volunteer that at that point organizations thought it was time to retire from volunteering. Perhaps due to physical challenges over mental and desire. The interview questions that prompted revealing data for Research Question 2 as follows:

Q2. How Would You Define 'Volunteer'?

Most participants considered volunteering an unpaid position or work without compensation. Commonly words such as commitment, energy, compassion, and mission oriented were used in their answers. Wanda scripted the most succinct definition, "a volunteer position is one where there is no monetary exchange. [You] are giving hours and yourself to help an organization or an individual or a community in general."

Follow-up to Q2. In Your Opinion, How Do You Feel Your Work in Our Community Differs from Someone Who Might Live and Volunteer in a City?

Twelve out of the 15 participants responded to my follow up question and reflected, in one way or another the intimacy of volunteering in their rural Pacific Northwest communities. Eddie remarked that the community-based feeling elicits a "call-to-arms" to help people. That as a volunteer, he feels, "[you] can get to know the people [you] are helping because [you] see them on the street or in the grocery store." He also mentioned a lack of government sponsored organizations that fill needs in his community and how the grass root organizations he may volunteer for pick up on those needs because of the low populous and close proximity to everyone.

Similarly, Holly wrote that being known makes a difference, that volunteering in a city makes one so much more anonymous. She related this to having a significant impact on trust. Bonnie, too, felt that her Pacific Northwest community created an atmosphere where she is closer to the "real beneficiaries of what we do," that "because of the size of the community we can feel that our efforts are more hands on, and we can get the very rewarding feeling that we really are making a difference."

Constance reiterated these sentiments in that she felt in small towns it is easier to see the needs and know the people who could use a helping hand. Lorraine too felt that working in a small community is more personal. Not only do those she is helping recognize her, but the director of the organization knows her name.

Lorraine wrote, "that personal connection provides a drive to do more and work harder." Shelley (aged 73) wrote that she works with a couple at the food bank who used to work at a large city foodbank where families and individuals could only pick-up supplies three times per year. Her rurally located foodbank does not have restrictions like

that. The rural communities in the Pacific Northwest have the ability to see a need, fill a need perhaps more quickly than urban areas because of the close proximity neighbors have with one another.

In contrast, Audrey felt that there were more volunteer opportunities in a city and that it would be easier to join an organization more selectively and perhaps more personally appealing. She also wrote that she felt working with inner city folks might feel more rewarding. In addition, she added that she found she was spending a lot of time driving in her rural work. Rose felt that the needs in a city would be greater and that the overall support for organizations would also be greater. Marilyn did not volunteer when she lived in a city because she did not have as much free time (due to commuting and other job/home related expectations and the distances between things.)

As with the motivation behind continuing to volunteer the answers to this question were personal. Participants specifically mentioned learning new skills and meeting people as two of the choice benefits and seeing the people or community they were helping grow was another enjoyable experience they gained from volunteering. Eddie, for example, mentioned he enjoyed thrift shopping and was skilled in finance. As a member of a board for a non-profit organization he volunteered at a thrift shop specific to their cause and he enjoyed the people he worked with and those that shopped in the store. He said, “it was mutually beneficial. I enjoyed thrifting and the people who enjoyed thrifting too.”

Rose shared the same enthusiasm with her mutually beneficial volunteer work. “I like making crafts, so I raised money over the year for Christmas for Kids.” Penelope

worked in the office of a hospital hospice program and she felt very strongly that she was benefiting the staff because, “I did the office work and the staff worked with the patients. I felt like I was taking some load off of the nurses, I felt useful, and helpful getting the work done for them.” Olivia liked seeing the animals find their forever homes through adoption, that motivated her to keep trying to volunteer with the animal shelter.

Most significantly, the barriers were physical and/or technical. The participants who were seventy and older felt that their inability to work with the new technology really was a barrier and their age was becoming a barrier as to what they could do physically. Eddie, on the other hand had other physical limitations, “It gets too physically hard, due to my own physical barriers, to work in the thrift store sometimes so I focus on my work on the board.”

COVID-19 had, of course become a barrier for everyone but several of the participants mentioned making masks or delivering groceries or visiting through windows the elderly and infirm. I thought this was significant to their altruism in that they had the disadvantage of organizations shutting down and yet they choose to volunteer in other ways almost immediately after the decry to shut down happened. They recognized a new need and addressed it immediately.

Most of the volunteers were adamant about not wanting appreciation or accolades yet in their answers to the questions about retaining volunteers they alternately mentioned appreciation as key.

Significantly, several of the participants mentioned the absence of younger volunteers and the notion that when they volunteer for organizations, they see the same

faces volunteering. There is worry that when they retire from volunteering due to age or losing interest or the cause is no longer an issue that no one will be there to take their place. Juxtaposed to these comments were comments from the younger women. Marilyn commented that one of her biggest barriers was needing to know the right people or be in the right group to break into the organizations and become a volunteer. Olivia felt that due to her age the staffing of organizations did not take her seriously and would not respond to her requests to volunteer nor provide her with tasks when she showed up for volunteer experiences.

Another significant finding was that the organizations that the participants left early or lost interest in volunteering for did not provide guidance for tasks, did not show organization, nor did the leadership make the mission of the organization clear. Most volunteers did not include the lack of appreciation as significant to losing interest or needing to leave an organization. These majority felt they did not volunteer for appreciation, they volunteered to make a difference in their communities. Lorraine felt that the overboard appreciation attempts like luncheons or gift baskets were unnecessary and she does not accept gifts nor attend the luncheons. Her volunteering is for the individuals she assists, not to provide her with self-worth.

The participants shared differing skills. Gwen felt drawn to building an organization from the ground up, getting it ready to include volunteers and then moving along to a new opportunity to build an organization. Marilyn felt that more organizations should be prepared with job descriptions and in doing so volunteers could be matched to a skill set. Her example was data collection and technology and that these were skill sets

that many older volunteers might not have or might not enjoy doing yet, she did. Two of the participants, Olivia and Rose, enjoyed volunteering to work with animals more than volunteering with organizations that were human related.

The most diverse answers were addressed toward Q11: How would you advise someone if they were trying to decide to volunteer? Several mentioned finding one's passion, one laughed and proclaimed, "Just go for it!" and others mentioned shadowing someone who is in the volunteer area of interest. Another mentioned being patient when beginning to volunteer because not all organizations are geared to helping one assimilate to the goal. Joyce, mentioned being sure to ask a lot of questions, admitting you do not know what you don't know and admitting that you aren't in the right volunteer organization if it isn't a good fit. Commitment and showing up when there is a schedule was very important to two participants as they had done a lot of work themselves because other volunteers who had signed up did not show up to work.

Volunteering in one's community is a reciprocal endeavor. Participants in this study concur that no matter where one volunteers the benefits to working for a cause or aiding where needed provides an opportunity to be self-fulfilled. All but one of the applicants was retired and they all found that scheduling volunteer work provided their daily lives with goals and initiated a sense of being needed, although this is not the word that they used their description of knowing they needed to be somewhere and dedicated to a schedule was satisfying. Shelley said that due to the COVID 19 pandemic and sheltering in place to stay healthy she felt lethargic and unproductive accentuating the satisfaction of being scheduled to volunteer. It was also significant that those who could

not volunteer in their organizations due to the virus scare had found other capacities to volunteer in. Mask-making, shopping for those who needed, filling the food banks and student lunch/dinner programs, making sure that the humane society animals had food, bedding, and toys and some provided treats for the first responders, custodial staff, and college students that became stranded in dorms or apartments due to the universities shutting down. The motivation to volunteer was integral to their way of life no matter the circumstance.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Establishing trust between myself, as researcher, and potential future researchers and organizations that might use my research was crucial to extending and growing the volunteer workforce in rural communities. To do so is to show evidence of credibility, transferability, and dependability.

Credibility

As mentioned in Chapter 3 internal consistency is having records that are organized and thought-out as well as clarifying terms and being consistent and following all ethical standards. Maintaining transparency of the research with participants as well as noting when and how I reached saturation in my research was important for credibility as is backing up the results of the research with evidential theory and data results. Having a check-in schedule via email and telephone with my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Lee Stadtlander, while maintaining flexibility during interviews and dispelling bias in my research establishes credibility for this research.

During the interview process I took my time with each participant and allowed them to answer each question to the best of their ability. I relayed information about my study to them before, during and after the interview process. I gave them the opportunity to request the results after the study is over. Building credibility with my participants reflects on my credibility for this research as well. Unfortunately, and not reflecting on credibility, the interview sessions were much shorter as were the answers to the questions due to the changed venue and style of the interview process.

Transferability

Developing clear and concise results from this research that can be utilized by organizations to effectively recruit and retain rural volunteers is the precursor to this research. I followed each precisely and kept meticulous records and I checked in with my Dissertation Committee which helped me to develop a project that can be transferred to other researchers and/or organizations that want to use the research for their benefit. Developing this research as a replicable project was key.

Dependability

To assure dependability in my research I asked the same questions of each participant and recorded the interviews. I wrote answers while interviewing via phone as well as transcribed the interviews. Utilizing coding I coded each interview transcript for themes and similarities using the same methodology for each. Validity in the research can rely on this consistency as does the step-by-step methodology I described in Chapter 3.

In addition, keeping a journal throughout the Dissertation process provided an audit trail as well as the ability to check my own bias in the research. I relied on my

Dissertation Committee to apply and relay constructive criticism as I drafted each stage of writing and research. This dependability on my committee helped create trust for those who read it.

Confirmability

This research was consistent, it was neutral, it was objective, and will be easily replicated. This provided confirmation that other researchers can use this format and organizations can use the results to add to the positive recruitment and retainment of their volunteers due to their ability to notate who volunteers, why they volunteer, and why they continue to volunteer. The findings were reliable, and they came directly from the participants' interview answers and the integrity of our connection during the interview process.

Summary

This chapter included a summary of the research project, research questions, pilot study, the setting of the research, and demographics of the participants and the data collection process. This chapter also established evidence of trustworthiness by providing strategies for credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The summary provided a synopsis of the research itself and answers for each research questions by using the interview questions themselves.

Chapter 5 includes an in-depth look at the findings of my study. I related these findings to the literature review in Chapter 2 as well as the theories I used. This chapter includes my interpretation of the research findings, the limitations of the research, recommendations for further research, and social implications of this work. I provide a

conclusion which will include key issues of this project as well as the social change that I believe can happen by utilizing the information in this project and the results of the interviews as well.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore what motivates individuals in rural Pacific Northwest to volunteer. The lack of research on rural volunteers, which was examined in the review of the literature, Chapter 2, provided a foundation for this project. Little literature exists on the rural volunteer (Svendsen & Svendsen, 2016). In addition, measures of motivation behind volunteering were not clearly denoted in the literature (Butt et al., 2017). It was not known what motivated individuals in rural areas to freely give of themselves to meet these social needs. This qualitative research study was used to address this problem by interviewing volunteers. The data contains an introspective into the attributes or commonalities of the participants' motivation to volunteer for organizations that address the social needs in their rural communities.

Rural communities in the Pacific Northwest are poverty-stricken. Jobs are few, single parenting is common, and resources for community members are not easily accessible. Social services like mental and health services, childcare, employment procurement assistance, and other services that urban areas take for granted are not accessible (Butt et al., 2017; Moore et al., 2016). When organizations have the ability or the knowledge to attract, motivate, and retain volunteers, they then can create a plan for growing their volunteer workforce. This workforce could then focus on social needs of their rural communities, eventually creating social change by eliminating these needs by helping the communities help themselves. A volunteer workforce saves communities money, brings people together, and provides opportunities to develop and reinforce the

communities (Barati et al., 2013; Caprara et al., 2012; Guan & So, 2016; Tajfel, 1982). With the needs of the community being met the community will grow stronger and change the diversity of elements that are failing (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007b, 2007a; Keltner, 2017). This research project specifically focused on rural volunteers in the Pacific Northwest about 90 to 100 miles from the nearest metro areas.

Qualitative research allowed me to a view a phenomenon through the experiences of others and coding the results of the study provided insight and depth to the research. To code the results, I took the data and fragmented it into usable information that was easier to analyze. Parallels to past research on volunteers and volunteerism were discovered most significantly in the demographics of the participants and commonality of reasons behind choosing to volunteer. The majority of respondents in this rural study were white women who were retired, and the average age of the 15 participants was 68. The median age was 73, and four participants were 77 years old. This research project provided the opportunity to learn what is significant in terms of motivations of volunteers in the rural Pacific Northwest.

Chapter 5 includes an overview of this study. In interpreting these findings, I used the four concepts written about in detail in Chapter 2; the volunteer process model, social identity theory, ecological theory, and social capital theory to better understand the phenomenon of volunteering or giving freely of one's time, skills, knowledge, and self. Provided also are limitations of this study, recommendations for future studies, and the social change implications that are highlighted in the results of this study as well as a summary conclusion of this research and data collection process.

Telephonic interviews wherein I asked the same 18 questions of each participant were then coded to find the similarities and differences in the attributes within the volunteer experiences of each participant. A follow-up question was emailed following the interviews to clarify rural volunteering attributes. Pseudonyms were used for each participant for research integrity purposes and maintaining anonymity.

Interpretation of the Findings

Volunteer Process Model

Utilizing the volunteer process model to develop the interview questions simplified the interview process and aligned the results with the theoretical approaches I used. This model interprets volunteering as a decision of existential importance driven by motivation (Dass-Brailsford et al., 2011; Marta et al., 2006; Omoto et al., 2010; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998). This notion relies on the background of the individual as the participants responded to drive them to wanting to pursue volunteering (Lau et al., 2019). According to volunteer process model, volunteering happening in three stages. The antecedent stage happens when the individual decides that they want to volunteer. The second stage is the experiences stage, which involves actual experiences of volunteering and how the individual perceives those experiences. Third, the consequences stage is when the action of volunteering changes the individual's attitude, knowledge, and behaviors.

Four participants specifically mentioned they had grown up volunteering. Constance, Penelope, Audrey, and Holly were all brought up volunteering within their parents' churches. All three taught Sunday School when they were in high school. The

antecedent that helped guide these four women to volunteering was that they had spent a lifetime volunteering and it was a natural transition during retirement to do so again. Penelope, was the only homemaker of the 15 participants. During her interview, she mentioned that an additional reason that she started volunteering was because of her children. They were in school, and teachers asked for class moms. Penelope was not working, so she eagerly volunteered.

It is remarkable that when asked the follow-up question Eddie, Shelley, Bonnie, and Holly all noted that seeing needs firsthand within their community was a precursor to volunteering or a "call to arms" according to Eddie. In the rural community, it is evident that being closer to the need creates the desire to seek out how to help.

For the participants in this project, satisfaction and intrinsic rewards are precursors for a positive experience stage. Building or finding relationships, having fun with those they volunteer with, and meeting people were reported as satisfying aspects of their volunteer experiences. Intrinsically, noting that they saw change in those with whom they worked for was a reward that supported their continuance in volunteering as was providing those in their community a chance at a bettered life. Wanda specifically and quite noticeably on our telephonic interview grew excited when I asked what motivated her to continue volunteering. She shared that the moment the door opens in the local classroom(s) she volunteers in and she sees the delight in the faces of the children when she is discovered. The children glance around and start pointing at themselves in hopes they get to read to her that day. Wanda's voice went up an octave and she started talking faster when she told me the different times, she saw improvements in the reading abilities

of the children. She was finding intrinsic and extrinsic benefits from the experience of volunteering. Additionally, when asked about rural volunteering the participants quite profoundly remarked that living in the close communities with those, they helped was motivation to volunteer to meet those needs. Bonnie said,

> We are much closer to the real beneficiaries of what we do to volunteer. Because of the size of the community, we can feel that our efforts are more hands-on, and we can get the very rewarding feeling that we really are making a difference.

Finally, the consequences stage of the volunteer process model, which includes changes in attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors in the volunteer and those that receive services from the volunteer and the relationships involved (Omoto et al., 2010). The volunteer experience was not always a positive one. Lorraine described her first volunteer experience with patient services. She was assigned to an assisted living facility and ended up feeling hopeless and helpless until she talked with the manager of the volunteer service to change her position. She did not have specific tasks, nor could she assist the patients with what they wanted and what they needed as she was not a nurse, just a volunteer. This consequence, of antagonistic relationships and the lack of feeling like she was making a difference was a direct consequence of not being placed in a volunteer situation that was a good fit.

From this project this model provided relevance in both the positive experiences that individuals in the study have had with volunteering and the negative experiences. All 14 of the retired volunteers who were older with experience in the working world, or in the homemaking responsibilities were almost driven to continuing to volunteer. They

have found passion and commitment to local organization or organizations, have had mostly positive experiences in changing the lives or circumstances for people in their own communities which have driven them to continuing their experiences in volunteering. The youngest participant has had the opposite reaction. She was not welcomed, her skills were not utilized and although the organization with whom she tried to volunteer advertised for help they did not appear to want her time, knowledge nor abilities and in fact did not contact her for assistance but let her application expire.

The intrinsic affirmation that occurs when a volunteer can be involved in fulfilling a need and see the effects that involvement has on the lives or environment of others in their community creates personal growth as well as the desire to do more (Keltner, 2017). When asked about the differences in rural and city volunteering it was evident that the positive consequences of change motivated participants to continue. The participants acknowledge pride and respect which directly relates to positive volunteer morale and therefore a greater chance of retention (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007a). The older volunteers found personal growth and appreciation for the work that they participate in while the younger volunteer did not feel that volunteering was a sincere path for those her age. The consequences of each are obvious, continued volunteering compared to the wariness or perhaps resistance to volunteering in the future.

Social Identity Theory

While the volunteer process model provided a reflection of the individual's role identity within a community or volunteer organization the social identity theory applied a method of noticing how the individual's relationship to the group contributed to their

sense of self, self-esteem, and sense of belonging. The project results, although reflective of the participants' sense of self and self-esteem, showed a higher response rate for a sense of belonging and this stood out as an individual motivator. Each participant, especially the retirees, had established self-awareness due to their ages, past careers, and well-established social circles. Olivia and Marilyn also commented on the desire to meet others and build on their self-awareness. All the volunteers reflected on helping their local communities with challenges that most might not see. The drive to help those in their community was based on intrinsic pride in where they lived and, in the desire, to strengthen the tie to the community for those they were helping.

Identifying socially as a volunteer implied the need for deep reflection on how the relationship between the individual and the group or organization contributed to their sense of self, self-esteem, and sense of belonging. Another social aspect is the connection between volunteer and the person in need. Tajfel and Turner (1979) designated three variables I used when defining key words for the coding process of the transcribed interviews. As mentioned in Chapter 2, there are three variables defining the individual in a volunteer situation. The following passages denote these variables and are designated as V1, V2 and V3.

V1: The individual must have internalized their membership within the group as an aspect of their self-concept. An individual's social identity is gleaned from specific roles which fulfill their sense of belonging or that they are enveloped in due to matters of circumstance from multiple strains of their life spanning between familial roles, educational roles, and societal roles (Farmer & Fedor, 2001; Kulik, 2006). Once the individual has chosen to fully

adopt the role of volunteer into their personal life their commitment to the chosen organization and their community in which they volunteer increases (Hartenian & Lilly, 2009; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998).

To be specific and emphasize the social identity theory's applicability to this research I coded this statement by Lorraine wherein she called the experience as being "outside of oneself and beyond simple pleasure." She explained that that volunteering became a part of who she was after she retired. She stepped out of her comfort zone and is volunteering with an organization that has nothing to do with her career skill set. Comparatively nine of the 15 participants felt that the volunteering duties that they performed were helping their communities and they were willing to commit to continuing and as Gwen stated she does so with "wisdom and compassion." Volunteering then, for the 15 participants became an internalized variable with differing missions and goals for each organization the key was the action of volunteering and the intrinsic and extrinsic albeit organic benefits that came with it.

Volunteering nurtured a basic human need of companionship by placing the individual in a group wherein the nature of the work itself has a common goal. In doing the work the individual naturally gained admiration and approval from friendships (Cady et al., 2018) outside of the volunteer work as well as from within. Shelley (aged 73) explained, "It feels like [I'm] hanging out with the girls but we are part of a group that has a mission to help others," explained Shelley (aged 73). Although 14 of the 15 participants were firm in not needing outward appreciation, admiration, or approval

accolades from those they assisted as well as personal rewards were frequent and decisively a common denominator for motivating them to continue in a volunteer role.

Social situations as a volunteer are not avoidable as one is engaging with and interacting with others while volunteering. However, in investigating further post-interview some of the participants did specifically comment on the social aspects. Marilyn (aged 51) for example, mentioned that she had moved to the area seven years prior to the interview and volunteering was one way that she began to develop social relationships and therefore volunteering was vital to her social situation. Eight of the 15 participants commented that they enjoyed the people they volunteered with and/or used volunteering as a connection with others after retirement. Helping one's community put social situations into the forefront directive of volunteering. Holly (aged 71) relayed that she felt volunteering is critical to society and Gwen (aged 60) found she became committed to volunteering to "get out of the white privilege bubble, connect and see that we are all the same." In reflecting over the data, I found that for the participants volunteering, even with animals, provided a social connection and two of the 15 participants became committed to their causes due to those connections. As Olivia believed, volunteering made a difference to the broader communal sense as well. In these inferences I denoted that V2 social identity theory is clearly related to volunteering.

V2: The social situation must be such to allow for an intergroup comparison.

As organizations draft plans to create better standards of living and accessible social services the potential for volunteers to step forward as they become aware of the challenges facing other. Their innate need to protect and help others would be activated

due to the public awareness of those in the community in need (Brunell et al., 2014; Keltner, 2017; Lai et al., 2013; Phillips & Phillips, 2010). In regard to helping those who are less fortunate the volunteer is not only protecting others who are less fortunate but by building their innate sense of self through charitable acts and at the same time identifying with a group which with reciprocal accolades can be fundamental to volunteers' motivations and experiences of volunteering (Butt et al., 2017; Gray & Stevenson, 2020; C. Magnuson, personal communication, 2017).

The social identity theorist assumes that individuals will experience, develop, and cherish the social connectedness of volunteering as well as develop friendships within the organizations. There is a connectedness between the role an individual holds in a volunteer organization, volunteering as an action, and connectedness with those they are helping, and often neither hold a social expectation or a hierarchy within the organization but are directly related to the individual's sense of self (Kelly, 2013; Kroll, 2011).

As mentioned before, several of the volunteers mentioned social connectedness as something they sought out by finding volunteer positions as well as found while volunteering an extension of this feeling of connectedness with the community as they helped neighbors in need. The rural volunteer, from the participants in this study have the perspective that they are invested in aiding people in their community because they live closely with them. The tangential line between volunteer and community members is crossed and not only are the needs seen but needs are being met. The rural volunteer also has a closer relationship to the members of the organization. As Lorraine (aged 68) wrote,

"The director I work with knows my name and a lot about me." These working relationships are important as are those between volunteer and person in need.

V3: The in-groups do not have the need to compare themselves with external groups.

Appreciation was provided mostly internally as was the esteem that each volunteer held for themselves. Most seemed to be volunteering to have a tangible effect on their communities. In addition, 10 out of the 15 did feel that appreciation [not necessarily intended for them] from the organization was warranted and that appreciation does help volunteers continue with the work. It is more notably the quality of life and the feeling of value within the organization not the personalized appreciation that was defined. Olivia said:

> Even though volunteering is altruistic there are gains to be made and organizations need to be appreciative and transparent with what those benefits are for all ages. If you advertise for volunteers that fit a group that is 18 years of age and above, know your grouping. Younger volunteers probably need more assistance, but they want to be involved, they mostly want to give of their time so make it work for them, don't just ignore them.

To identify with/or as a member of the organization, in addition to maintaining the values of the mission and being appreciated even just by seeing the improvement or emotional effects on the community provides the volunteer with a connection with the in-group that is mentioned in the third variable in the social identity theory. Moreover, the collectivity of working together toward a common social change goal within an

organization or for an organization provides a connectedness for the volunteer. This connectedness creates camaraderie and relationships between volunteers that might not develop without the volunteer experience. The motivation to enhance the lives of others with a group that has the same goals places an identity on the individual. This is collective engagement (Nieves, 2012) and connects the individual to the community.

Enhancing the lives of others in a rural community becomes more intimate in that these are children and adults in need that are living, shopping, attending churches, and schools with the volunteers and their families. In a city it is not unusual for volunteers to come from the suburbs to work in inner city soup kitchens, for example. In the rural Pacific Northwest communities, there is not as significant of a living gap between socio-economic classes in that there may be one grocery store, one post office, one gas station, and for a large expanse of this area there is one very run down near empty mall. In this regard, visually, seeing those in need both prior to and after the volunteer gets involved provided a drive, for many, to help.

Ecological Theory

The ecological theory provides a foundation for the relational systems individual develop over their lifetimes, specifically relationships on a micro, meso, and exo systems (Kulik, 2006; Pozzi et al., 2014) which are defined in more detail in Chapter 2. The 15 individuals that participated in this project were volunteers within their own communities in the rural Pacific Northwest and they did so without requesting benefits or regarding personal cost (Mojza et al., 2010; van Ingen & Wilson, 2017; Wilson, 2000). This altruistic behavior created a projection of their volunteer self into the relationships that

are held within the triad (micro system, meso system, and exo system). The participants were all adults, so their relationship systems were vast and included but were not limited to family, church, career, friends, community as well as the organizations they volunteered with. These were all relationship systems that are significant to the individual who volunteers for them as well as those they are helping.

The ecological theory attempts to understand the individual by examining the multi-person interactions they have within all their social roles (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). This notion of multi-level projections of self is incredibly apparent in the answers provided by the participants I interviewed. All of the participants were adults with an average age of 68, a mean age of 73, and eleven of the participants were 60 years older, thus as a researcher I realized that their multi-person systems would be extensive.

The lives of the participants were multifaceted and provided context or as Bronfenbrenner (1977) called them, blueprints, for their altruistic views. These views gave them the will to give of themselves freely to the volunteer organizations with their rural communities. The work the individual does in the community as a volunteer whether in groups or individually, formal or informal will depend on the relationships that have been developed through these systems. During the interactive process, there is instantaneous and continual growth for the individual as well as the inter-connections between groups and therefore the systems (Bushway et al., 2011). In addition, the commitments of the relationships that are developed through the systems involving the individual can be interpreted at the highest level in that the individuals then may

manipulate the macro-systems by re-writing or expanding policy and therefore creating social changes in their communities as well (Levy et al., 2012).

Interview question one guided the participant into revealing the blueprint piece of the ecological theory as it asked, “What originally brought you to the decision to volunteer?” The answers varied but provided important links to the participants development within the three systems. For example, Lorraine retired from teaching and knew she wanted to do something “outside of [her]self” and beyond her life’s simple pleasures. She knew also that she had the capacity to learn new skills and she wanted to volunteer “outside of what [she] knew.” She is now a volunteer for patient support at a local hospital. Eddie (aged 53) is retired from the military and he wanted to do something for his community but commented later that volunteering was “just in [his] DNA.” Three of the 15 participants mentioned a past lifetime of volunteering due to growing up in churches. Two of the 15 had parents who were very involved with volunteering as they grew up. This provided a foundation of altruism for these participants. In fact, the combined volunteer years for all of the participants was an incredible 383 years. The average accumulation set at 25.5 years and the median for comparison was 20 years and the mode was 20 and 27 years as both numbers appeared twice in the data.

As previously mentioned, rural communities have unique social needs as well as mainstream social needs. Growing the volunteer workforce could fulfill the need for assistance and solidifies the importance of studies like these. Meade (2014) discussed challenges that are rural community specific such as lack of transportation, a multitude of economic crisis, and a lack of services such as medical or technological resources. Rural

volunteers rise and meet these needs. Wirth (1938) presented an analysis of rural communities that is still apparent in 2021, wherein these communities have intra-group cohesion and strong local bonds. These communities are transparent and members, due to the low populations have little anonymity. Volunteers in these communities provide such a service that crosses the socio-economic boundaries of rural communities. Another component that aids in this cohesion is trust. Since the volunteers are from the same communities and have intimate knowledge of the services, personality, history, and social inner workings of their community they develop a deep trust between themselves and the ones they are helping. This reciprocal, trusting relationship is critical for organizations to have success (Coleman, 1988b; Engbers et al., 2017; Lorente-Ayala et al., 2020). Holly (aged 77) specifically compared trust in the community and trust in a city wherein one would be essentially anonymous vice being know in the rural community. Constance (aged 77) agreed and added the ability to see the need, which can aid in building trust.

Social Capital Theory

Reciprocity is at the foundation of the social capital theory. Volunteering is a selfless act and admirably based in altruism or the caring for another without regard of self (Haski-Leventhal, 2009). Batson (2010) defined altruism as the act of increasing another's welfare with no other goal in mind i.e. self-gain..

Olivia, for example, sought out volunteer opportunities wherein she could build her skill set. Shelley sought out fun relationships. Another example, Marilyn moved to the area and sought out volunteer positions so she could meet people. Constance said, "It's about the relationships!" And further commented that these gains were at all levels

from the other volunteers to those who ran the organizations to those she helped. Each of these participants gave their time freely, however, they were receiving non-monetary gains in return. Providing a volunteer service is an investment in the community that does not depreciate (Aziz, 2015).

There is, in a rural community, the ability to gain the "very rewarding feeling that [we] really are making a difference" (Bonnie, aged 79). This return is visual due to the rural community and the closeness of its members. The ability to see needs, find organizations or individuals that are making efforts to meet those needs is not difficult in this Pacific Northwest rural area. There is an atmosphere according to the research participants of collective action and motivation to commit to volunteering. The volunteer's efforts are met with tangible progress which becomes reward of socially changing one's community for the better. Furthermore, a reciprocal reward lies in the relationships of trust symbolic with the selfless service (Phillips & Phillips, 2010).

This provides conclusive data the investment in this rural Pacific Northwest community is great and with growing the volunteer workforce social change can provide betterment for the communities in the area. The strive to volunteer and make a difference that was apparent in the interviews was accentuated when I coded the words and phrases of the interviews. Values, work, has meaning, making a difference, community, connections, encounters with others, compassion, caring seeing progress and seeing the reward when things change are all indicative of volunteering and the social capital theory.

As previously mentioned, rural communities are disadvantaged, and their social needs are high in addition to the organizations that might help are inaccessible. The

literature cautioned that rural communities are often poverty stricken as well and this rural area of the Pacific Northwest is no exception. Thus, the need for a volunteer workforce is indeed apparent. Volunteerism is an act of civic duty and the 15 participants surely provide their share of hours. The literature brought forth three types of volunteerism: sociological, psychological, and political (Hustinx et al., 2010). This project complies with the research as well as adds the significance of rural which was lacking in the literature (Svendsen & Svendsen, 2016).

Motivational attributes of volunteerism have been threaded through this chapter. The research provided the concept or theory that organizational commitment is driven by social identity or self-categorization specifically related to the motivation to volunteer (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007a). Hustinx et al., 2010, described the volunteer ecology wherein volunteers serve others by giving skills, resources, and selfless will. Echoing this positivity in regard to selflessness, Ainsworth, 2020, states that this ownership and behavior has positive outcomes. These positive outcomes are apparent in the participants enthusiasm for the work that they do. In fact, their ownership of the positions they hold provided for the significant rewards they shared with me during the interview. Rose (aged 73), for example, enjoyed the excitement the children showed when she walked through their classroom door to read with them. Penelope (aged 77) found pleasure in office work and has found several organizations that need her skills. She mentioned a local hospital hospice program specifically and felt ownership in her work because she did it well and she felt she was taking tedious work away from staff who were helping patient and families during a devastating time of life.

Collective action is needed in this Pacific Northwest rural area to create social changes in social services. This research project supports that knowledge and the theories provided for concrete information and baselines in the work and development of the questions. The extensive research for the literature review presented gaps in rural volunteerism as well as rural volunteerism and motivation. This research begins a conversation; however, it has its limitations.

Limitations of the Study

Predictable limitations were addressed previously as situations and circumstances out of my control such as cancellations, participants ending the interview prematurely and perhaps the weather. No one could have predicted the year 2020 and the worldwide COVID-19 virus pandemic or the violent racial tensions the ensued during the pandemic but these were the circumstances that preempted changes in my research that were manageable but detrimental, in my opinion.

Originally, the interviews were going to take place with the participant in the community in a coffee shop or library. Both locations, throughout the research area have private rooms for anonymity and focus. The COVID-19 virus closed the world and scientists, and health officials did not recommend social gatherings or connections due to the rapid spread of the virus. The interviews were changed to telephonic, recorded interview. The limitations ensued in that the answers to the questions were shorter and not as detailed. The inability to ask follow-up questions occurred due to the inconvenience and discomfort of the telephonic connection. It is difficult to develop relationships over the phone when the conversations are only an hour long so the

communication was not as personable as I had hoped, thus, the limitation of the interviews themselves.

A limitation that I did not foresee was a weakness in my questions in regard to rural volunteering. Fortunately, I could return to the participants and ask them specifically about rural volunteers enhancing and solidifying my research.

Another limitation was the lack of contrast between volunteers and non-volunteers that I had not considered in the conceptualization of this project. Recently, I was in a public location and overheard a woman say, “I would never volunteer – work for free? No way sister!” In that moment it occurred to me that not interviewing individuals like her, those that do not even consider volunteering, provided a limitation in the work.

I anticipated diversity in the participants. The original email that snowballed was delivered to organizations such as: Pride Foundation, Habitat for Humanity, American Civil Liberties Union of Idaho, African American Student Center, and to Native list serves and I am familiar with people who work for, volunteer for these organizations. Instead, the participants mirrored the other research on volunteers, my average white women who are retired and over 60 with a few outliers and only one male. I feel this limits the study due to the lack of diversity.

Recommendations

This qualitative research project provided a reflection of what motivated individuals in the rural Pacific Northwest to selflessly volunteer themselves to meet social needs in the area. The evidence collected through one-on-one telephonic interviews was not significantly different than the literature review revealed, however, if rural

motivations are the same as urban motivations for volunteering there is an opportunity for social change in this work. The true differences fall within the intimacy of living so closely to those the volunteer is helping as well as the ability to build trust due to that familiarity.

It would be beneficial to future research and positive building of the volunteer workforce to interview individuals who choose not to volunteer. Studying what differences there are in a volunteer and a non-volunteer. Studying their differing perceptions of civic duty and social capital as well as their social identity and over all views on volunteering.

Another recommendation would be to repeat this research post COVID -19 and reach out to more diverse populations again and then compare the two different studies. Telephonic interviews versus in person one-on-on interviews would be an interesting study.

Implications

Social needs are increasing, especially now with the COVID-19 financial strain on communities. Volunteerism can be a buffer, an aid to those in need if the experience of volunteering is positive and reflective of the individual. The implications of this small segment of research shows that volunteering has reciprocal value both to the individual and to the community. In addition, interviewing volunteers from the specific area of the rural Pacific Northwest, provides insight into an integral piece wherein the members have exalted pride in their community and respectfully feel a responsibility to its members when it comes to need. The literature provides an outlook where the volunteers are

reaching out vis their own altruistic demeaner to volunteer organizations, but they are not personally connected to the members who have the need. For example, serving the homeless for an urbanite probably includes them driving to the area and servicing through a soup kitchen or organization that provides the location and all the supplies. In contrast is the rural Pacific Northwest volunteer who when providing food (usually from a community member's kitchen) they are looking at the faces of their own community members. Members that they see next to them in the store or whose children attend school with the very children they are serving free meals to. This link to the person they are providing a social service to reflects a deeper responsibility, a deeper drive to provide that service. Volunteer organizations in the rural Pacific Northwest can monopolize, positively, on this idea of community helping community to recruit and retain volunteers. The idea that the individual is helping out a neighbor appeals to the volunteer in this location it is sufficient to say that perhaps in other rural communities the same ideal would apply.

This study can be utilized by organizations to recruit and retain volunteers by providing the reciprocity needed to affect the individual. Reaching out to individuals of all ages to provide them with the positive aspects of volunteering within their community. To do so, utilizing what those individuals are passionate about and putting them to tasks set around those passions. Creating room for compassion for their neighbors and reciprocal strategies in organizations benefits them with free labor and the individual with structure, schedule and purpose. Volunteering also provide individuals with skills,

knowledge, and abilities for future employment as well, organizations should be aware of this and implement tasks accordingly.

Conclusion

A qualitative approach to the phenomenon of volunteerism was applied to this research study. Participants were recruited to participate in telephonic interviews that lasted at the longest, 45 minutes. These interviews were transcribed and coded as to the research questions. A third research question was identified after the interviews were transcribed and this has been addressed.

Volunteering is a reciprocal process that the participants reported as being rewarding and satisfying. Rural volunteering, this research has shown, has unique attributes which juxtapose the motivation of individuals to volunteer. To note is the pride the participants had for their rural Pacific Northwest community, the added motivation to volunteer local to help a neighbor in need and the ability to see progress and get intrinsically rewarded because making a difference is so apparent.

This project used a qualitative one-on-one telephonic interview process for the data collection. Key to this research was utilizing four concepts or theories which juxtaposed well together and provided a foundation for the questions and analysis. The participants provided not only information on motivations behind their selfless service but tips on recruiting and retaining volunteers within their community. This combination of information is invaluable for future work on growing the volunteer workforce in rural communities.

This study as well as the results provided information that organizations can use to develop training programs for the rural volunteer workforce growth and development. Since developing this research and building the literature review other articles have surfaced, however, they are written by the same authors or they are still lacking in rural volunteerism and motivations behind rural volunteerism. The opportunity for future research and collaboration is available. The rural area of the Pacific Northwest is hurting financially more significantly than when I started this research project. COVID-19 of course has closed many workstations and left more people unemployed in the area. The children are at home due to the closing of schools and some districts may not be maintaining their free or reduced breakfast and lunch programs. Children at home with unemployed parents has also caused a multitude of domestic problems. In addition, the Pacific Northwest area had a major summer fire that wiped out several towns. It is hard to live in poverty and then rebuild one's own homes and town. Utilizing this research to positively build a larger volunteer workforce would be reciprocally beneficial to the individuals that choose to volunteer locally in this rural area and to those who would be rewarded the extra assistance and compassion.

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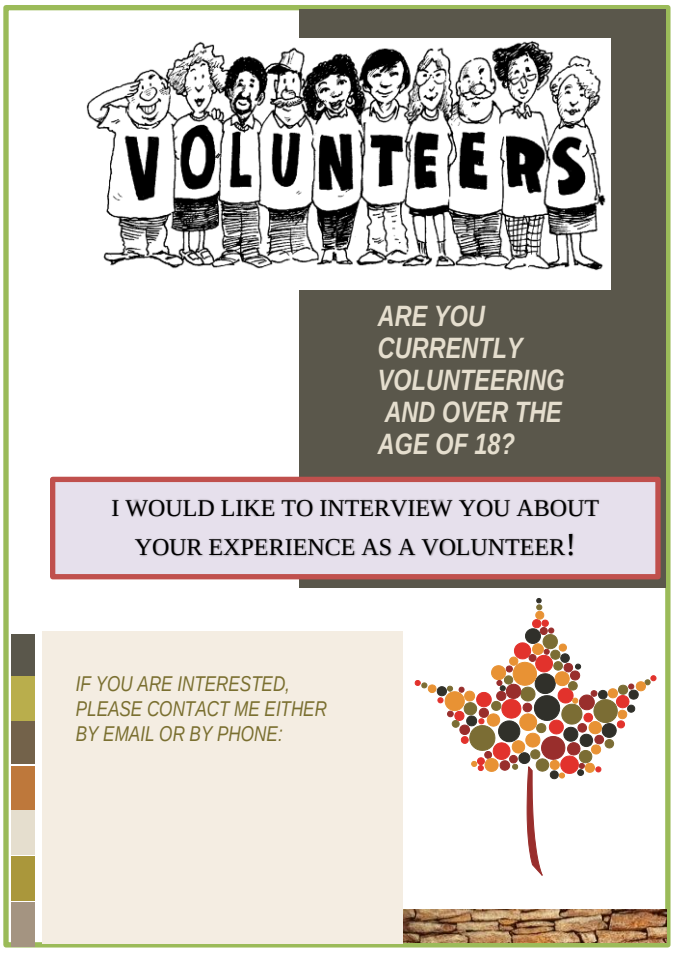
Appendix A: Example of a Recruitment Advertisement

SAMPLE PICK-UP FLYERS FOR BUSINESSES:



Appendix B: Interview Questions

Preliminary questions getting to know each other and developing trust. During this time the explanation of the study, the signing and distributing of participation permissions form and explanation of /interview process.

Name of Participant			Identifier	
Date:	Recording -	Start:	Finish:	
Able to follow up?	Yes	No	*Number or email:*	
Question			Phone record time:	
Q1. What originally brought you to the decision to become a volunteer?				
Q2. How would you define 'volunteer'?				
Q3. How many years have you been volunteering?				
Q4. Which organization/s do you currently volunteer for?				
Q5. How did you find out about these organizations?				
Q6. In a typical month, how many hours do you volunteer?				
Q7. Could you share an aspect of your volunteer experiences that you've really enjoyed?				
Q8. Could you share an aspect of your volunteer experiences that you wish could be different?				
Q9. What barriers do you find in volunteering for these organizations?				
Q10. Do you ever feel unappreciated for the work you do?				
Q11. How would you advise someone if they were trying to decide to volunteer?				
Q12. What recommendations might you give a volunteer coordinator on how to recruit new volunteers?				
Q13. What recommendations might you give a volunteer coordinator on how to retain current volunteers?				
Q14. You've volunteered for [ ] years. What motivates you to keep volunteering?				
Q15. Why do you think people quit volunteering?				
Q16. Describe a particular experience that motivates and energizes you to continue as a volunteer.				
Q17. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?				
Q18. What questions do you have for me?				
Thank them and remind them of follow-up and their ability to discontinue their participation in the project at any time.				